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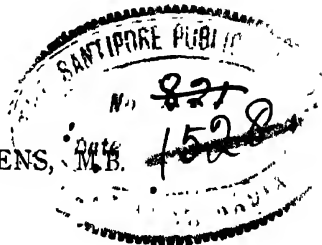
# THE CRUCIFORM MARK

THE STRANGE STORY OF RICHARD TREGENNA

BACHELOR OF MEDICINE (UNIV. EDIN.)

BY

RICCARDO STEPHENS, M.B.



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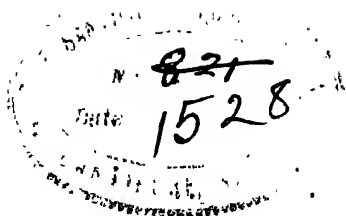
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# THE CRUCIFORM MARK

## CHAPTER I

### POST MORTEM

It was June, in Edinburgh, and the Finals in Medicine were well on. To us, who were in, there seemed, and had seemed for the last month, nothing else really worth talking about. As for me, Richard Tregenna, I was sick of it all. It was of more importance to me than to many that I should pass that year, and I had slaved at a time when other men with less anxiety and more wisdom lived as if examinations were not and never would be. The result was that I could 'stay' no longer, and I, on a sudden, grew careless. *Cui bono?* I had worked honestly and hard, and could work no more.

As I shied my Erichsen at the bookshelf, the shadow lifted. There was sunshine outside, and standing in it I felt a longing for the country, and wandered away thinking of the hills and burns and rising yellow trout. I would go fishing until Friday night.

Even as I decided this, I found that my accustomed feet had carried me to the Infirmary, and that I was staring at the surgical notice board, with its memoranda of the day's operations.

No, the surgical paper came next week—I would have none of that to-day—but as I strolled on, the grim but inconspicuous little notice board caught my eye, 'Post-mortem bodie,' and I went across to the post-mortem theatre, thinking of the sweet Tweed, and the country about it as I passed in.

I was a little early, and went to the front seats. A few third-year men lounged and chatted, or went over notes of the

morning lectures. One was<sup>1</sup> coaching another in *materia medica* just behind me, and brought down a heavy fist on the desk close by my head whenever his friend mistook the dose—which was often.

On the table just before me lay a white sheet, and under the sheet was the stiff sharp outline of a body. Familiarity breeds contempt, so they say, but surely not with all men, or for all things? To a Final man, the shell of what was perhaps only yesterday a better and brighter creature than himself, is a familiar object, but it never lost a certain grave and curious interest for me, and I sat there now, dreamily speculating who she was or had been (a long dark tress of hair trailed to the ground) and where she was now.

Idle speculation that last, but the first point was quickly settled, for the lecturer came in, the cloth was lifted aside, and I saw a face that I knew.

It took me back to something that had happened the week before, when, as I was reading late at night in my own room, in the Rookery, as the residents profanely called the students' settlement where I lived, Clegg had come to ask me if I would see one of his cases with him. Now, Clegg was a man of my year who had wisely decided to wait another twelve months before taking his Final; it was therefore especially important to him to do nothing which might show that he thought he knew less than I, who had the cheek to face the examiners. So this is the way that Clegg, an ingenious fellow, had worked up to what he wanted.

'Beastly hot night. What a bore to be cramming now! You're looking quite seedy. If you don't look out you'll break down before the Writtens; why don't you go out for half an hour and then get to bed? I swear your pupils are unequally dilated, and I believe there's astigmatism too.'

'Rot!' I retorted. 'Clear out! I've got a couple more hours' work to do.'

'Now, look here,' persisted Clegg, 'haven't you got clinical surgery to-morrow?'

'Yes,' I snapped at him.

'Well, you won't know a probe from a probang, if you aren't careful. Come out with me, I want to see a case in the Lawnmarket. I'm going to send her into hospital to-morrow, so you may get her in your clinical medicine later in the week.'

'Do you want me to come to some Lawnmarket den for fresh air?' I asked; but I went, on Clegg's assurance that it was a good case, and this is what I saw.

We passed through a dirty, airless court, where a king, and Hume, the prince of sceptics, once dwelt, now ornamented, as I knew, having seen it by day, only with drying clothes and the miscellaneous rubbish of the dust-bin, up a stair, odorous with the stinks of centuries, where two women hauled patiently at a drunken and blaspheming mass which was probably the lord and master of one of them. Up and up we went, past flat after flat of fighting, snoring, swearing humanity, here and there getting a whiff of freshness and a glimpse of sky through the narrow, barred stair-windows, till we reached the top, some eight storeys up, where, on a straw mattress, covered with a ragged patchwork coverlet, lay the patient. She was a girl only eighteen or twenty, dark-eyed and black-haired, who would have been pretty had she lived a healthy life outside the dirt and temptation of cities; but I knew her to be past-mistress, poor thing, in all forms of dissipation, and I knew her health had been wrecked thereby, for I had attended her through pneumonia only the winter before.

'I know the girl,' I said to Clegg; 'but what do you find peculiar about the case? She has half a dozen troubles. You've examined her chest, I suppose?'

'Oh yes, I know all that, but that's not the point. How has she been, Mrs. O'Reilly?' and he turned to one of the two women who stood by.

'The same, dochtor, always the same, and it's dying she is, but this lady' (turning with true Irish politeness to the other creature) 'has minded her these two hours. Tell the gentleman, Bridget, did she spake?'

'It's twice she's said "I'm dyin'," and twice she's said "glory," and no more will she open her mouth for bite or sup. If Father Rafferty don't come soon, Mrs. O'Reilly dear, it's a corpse he'll find to greet him.'

'Have you sent for the priest?' I asked.

'He'll be here in the morning, sorr,' answered Mrs. O'Reilly; 'but will she live till then?'

'Live!' I answered, 'why, of course she will; but if she is going to the Infirmary in the morning you must send to stop Father Rafferty, and he'll see her there.'



I drew Clegg away to the window. 'What did you want me to see her for?' I asked.

He answered by asking another question, 'Is she dying?'

'She's very low,' I answered, 'and she very likely is dying, especially if she thinks so, but she'll have a much better chance in the Infirmary.'

'What's she dying of?' asked Clegg, evidently not satisfied.

'Well, her lungs are all wrong, and the poor thing has lived a very hard life, I know. Probably she's just sinking now out of sheer exhaustion.'

Clegg gave a little sigh of relief. 'Well, after she gets into the Infirmary I'm not responsible, am I?'

'I don't know what you mean,' I said crossly. 'Whose ward will she go into?'

'Richie's.'

'Oh, of course,' I said sarcastically, 'if the case isn't quite clear to Richie, he'll call you in for consultation. Richie's always so doubtful of his own powers, isn't he? I think I see him consulting a student!'

But Clegg was not to be riled, neither did he seem very much inclined to talk further about it. He said, 'No doubt she'll be all right in the Infirmary,' and we came away together, leaving the two watchers, after refusing to taste the whisky with which they evidently intended to brighten the sick-room as much as possible. Just as we were turning away from the bed the sick girl had opened her eyes widely and said, 'I'm dyin'' in a firm, clear voice, and that was all she had said while we were there. I neither saw nor heard anything further of her until now, when I found her body stretched out before me on the table in the post-mortem theatre.

I remembered all this while the examination went on. The girl had been taken, we were told, into Professor Richie's female ward, as Clegg had expected, and had died there, some five days later, complaining very little, but gradually failing. Richie himself seemed interested in the case, for he came in and stood pompous, portly, and self-satisfied, while Howell, with his usual funereal air, made the examination. Howell always did that in a manner which made me sure that in a past stage of existence he had been an undertaker, and in a future one would certainly be a vampire. Indeed, there were already gruesome stories among junior medicals of Howell's meals, where they were taken and of what they consisted, and

he never gave George, the porter, orders to put aside some especially scientifically interesting organ, but what a grin and an only half-suppressed shudder would pass round among his more imaginative or younger students. Whether Howell knew of his sinister reputation I don't know, but I am sure that if he did know he did not care. Gaunt, red-bearded, funereal and cadaverous as he was, he was also an enthusiastic, hard-working and conscientious scientist, doing a great deal of unremunerative work in a very unpretending way, and it was said that he had lately all but succeeded in tracing the complete life-history of the red blood-corpuscle. Shy, and therefore cold and dry with his juniors, but always having the courage of his opinions, as he happened to show that morning. The examination went on, perhaps a little more slowly than usual, with now and then a few clear words of description and comment from Howell, and little interjected exclamations from Richie, who always seemed pleasantly satisfied at his own wonderful acuteness, which was, according to him, verified in the kindest manner by his past patients when they made their appearance in the post-mortem theatre, to which (report said) a fair number of them found their way. All through the examination it was 'Exactly so.' 'Just as I had supposed.' 'A beautiful illustration of what I had described,' and so on. At the end, while Howell hung over the table like a great black-plumaged, red-headed bird of prey, looking as though he meditated clutching what was left and bearing it away to some dark corner, Richie evidently thought this an occasion to be improved.

'If Doctor Howell will allow me, gentlemen,' he said, with a little condescending nod toward the contemplative Howell, 'I should like to point out to you the well-marked series of events, the different stages of which I have endeavoured to describe in my little work on the subject, possibly known to some of you, and so beautifully illustrated by what you now see.' The men on the benches stamped their applause, as in duty bound, but faintly as a rule, with the notable exception of one who wished to be funny and thumped so vigorously that he thought it best to leave at once.

Howell, completely absorbed in what was before him, nodded a careless consent, and went on peering and scrutinising anxiously, while the professor, swinging his gold-rimmed glasses, proceeded to explain all things with copious extracts from 'my

little work.' It was at that moment that I heard a stumbling, and a grumbling from other men sitting in the same line as myself, which ended in a sharp curse from the man next to me, as Clegg stumbled over his foot in crushing past, and clumped down beside me.

He paid no attention to his neighbour's freely expressed opinions of him, the size of his feet, his probable weight, and his general personal appearance, although Clegg, as a rule, was not a man to give either a soft answer or none. He didn't seem even to hear the injured one's remarks. He paid very little attention to Richie's eloquent explanations, but watched Howell anxiously while he stood and looked down on the table apparently forgetting where he was and what was going on around him.

'What does he say?' asked Clegg, jerking his head towards Howell's sombre figure.

'Nothing,' I returned. 'Why aren't you in your ward?'

'Wanted to know result,' whispered Clegg curtly, and continued to watch Howell in silence.

By this time Richie had explained everything to his own complete satisfaction.

'Death, gentlemen, must therefore inevitably ensue, in spite of my care and attention, since,' and then he went on into scientific phrases with which we have nothing to do, concerning the inability of an important organ to perform its work. Unfortunately the Professor looked upon this organ as his own particular property. His 'little work' had dealt with it extensively, and, I believe that, although he might have hesitated to acknowledge it, he secretly cherished an impression that an all-wise Providence had, as it were, formed that organ, with a view to his becoming its specialist. He therefore raised his voice to be heard by the back benches, and emphasised his points with his head turned in Howell's direction, so that even Howell must hear him. The result was unsatisfactory.

Howell, roused from what seemed to be anxious thought, stared aghast at the Professor's easy explanations, and at last, as the great man beamed upon us from his heights of superior knowledge, Howell, getting hold both of him and of the particular organ in question, quite obviously began in an undertone to dispute his conclusions. The Professor's dignified astonishment at such impertinence was interesting to see. At first

he seemed merely playfully contemptuous, waving the matter off with his glasses swung in his plump right hand, as though dispute were impossible. But Howell was on his own ground, and in a position of trust, and he would not be denied. He pressed his point, he illustrated it, he repeated it, and both men grew hotter, and both voices grew louder, as they bent to one another over the table, while the corpse stared silently up at the ceiling between them, with what seemed a careless, sardonic grin upon its pale face, at these two learned men who knew so little and said so much, while it knew all and said nothing.

As their voices rose together I turned to Clegg for sympathetic appreciation of the situation, but I was startled to see that if they had been discussing his own fate he could not have taken it more seriously. He was white to the lips and his breath came in little pants, while he clutched at the desk in front of him and leant forward, hungrily watching every movement of the lips of Howell, who was evidently his oracle.

The discussion was ended by the Professor's turning away with more haste than dignity, and going out at the little side door, very much like an enraged turkey cock. As for Howell, he stood quiet for a few moments looking down at the body before him, and perhaps steadying himself before he spoke.

At last he looked up.

'Gentlemen, you have had the various morbid appearances pointed out to you, and Professor Richie has also given you his opinion as to the cause of death. Since I am your teacher in this place, I feel bound to tell you that I am not satisfied with his explanation. These changes which you see might, in my opinion, although serious, be far more advanced without causing death. I am bound to confess, as honest men must confess sometimes, even when they are much wiser than I pretend to be, that I am ignorant of the cause of death in this case, and that I shall arrange for a more thorough examination, the results of which I will report to you.'

He nodded his intimation that there was nothing more to be done, and I rose to leave, but was startled by a heavy blow as I did so. Clegg, the hardened *habitué* of the infirmary and the dissecting-room, had fainted and fallen against me, and I and the man whose feet he had shown so little regard for, lifted him out between us.

## CHAPTER II

## THE ALL SOULS' CLUB

THAT night, after dinner, persisting in my determination to read no more, and feeling that to sit in my room without working would be impossible, I decided to go out. While I wondered where I should spend the evening, my eyes fell upon an invitation card, of what would probably be called a chaste design.

At the top was a gilt lyre twined with laurels, and underneath it was stated that this evening the members of the All Souls' Club would meet at No. 22 Merriam Street, which, as everybody knows, is the house of the celebrated Mrs. Reay-Carter. Now, I had considerable admiration for Mrs. Reay-Carter, though not for those qualities which were most prominent in her. Her beauty was undoubted, her besetting sin and danger was indolence. The danger was the greater because her beauty, being of the type known as statuesque, her poses and movements had to correspond. Hence exercise, so necessary from one point of view, was limited from the other, and what is known as carriage exercise (save the mark!) suited her attitudes and consequently her inclination best. I am ready to believe that she could be witty herself, and quick to see wit in others, but there again the fatal 'statuesque' forbade such a danger to symmetry, lest too sudden a smile or too unrestrained a laugh should destroy the outline, and even in time create wrinkles. She had a pleasant voice too, and cultivated it, since it afforded opportunities for graceful attitudes, but clearness of enunciation threatens the soft curves of the mouth, and therefore no one ever knew what Mrs. Reay-Carter sang about. In spite of all these little weaknesses, however, I repeat that I had an admiration for Mrs. Reay-Carter on account of a natural defect, which I dare say by this time she will have overcome. She was staunch to her friends and had a kindly disposition, of which I think she was a little ashamed. It savoured of the plebeian, and I have no doubt has been eradicated.

I decided to seek for amusement and instruction from the

All Souls' Club that night, and proceeded with many yawns and grumbles to get into evening dress, the All Souls' Club being in no way Bohemian either in dress or demeanour.

While I was dressing Clegg came in, still looking a little shaky, and stretching out on my bed asked what I meant to do. I told him, and asked if he would care to come too, since I was at liberty to bring a friend. He was dubious for a time, for the dear fellow made no pretence to the particular order of intellect that shines at such gatherings, although he was often strong in retort and clear-sighted in most things. He remembered, however, that 'some awfully fine girls' might be there, and that Mrs. Reay-Carter in her more frivolous moments gave good dances; he therefore went off to dress, having had my repeated assurance that he needn't shave.

Behold us, then, entering the drawing-room of Mrs. Reay-Carter to the sound of the tinkling of spoons and teacups and the low hum of intellectual conversation. Mrs. Reay-Carter received us in a dress of startling originality, since to be original in dress just then was orthodox and fashionable, and with the very newest handshake which she had just brought from London.

'So good of you to come to our poor little meetings, Mr. Tregenna—or is it Doctor? Not yet? Oh, those horrid examinations! Quite a number of men have disappointed me to-night because—what do you think?—they're afraid to meet my husband until he has examined them. Isn't it absurd to be afraid of him? You're more plucky, aren't you? but then there's no fear for you. Now you won't be sarcastic to-night, will you? I'm always so nervous if anything of mine is read when you're here.'

I couldn't help smiling at this, for Mrs. Reay-Carter knew no more of nervousness than the knocker of her front door did, but she pounced on me at once.

'Now you're going to say something cruel, I know you are, and I'm going to run away.'

'I don't think I'm going to be cruel,' I said. 'I want to do my friend Mr. Clegg the kindness of introducing him to you, if you'll allow me?' and the introduction was accordingly made.

'You belong to the Settlement too, don't you?' asked Mrs. Reay-Carter, beaming upon him, 'and I'm afraid you'll be clever and horrid too. You're all alike up there,' and she

glided away to greet some newcomers, before poor Clegg had found words to repel the fearful accusation.

'What a deuced fine woman !' he murmured to me. 'Why she's a perfect Juno !'

'Don't tell her so,' I advised him. 'Diana is more her fancy, with a little of Minerva chucked in. Shall I introduce you to some of the people?' And taking him round the room, which began to fill, I introduced him to some of the leading lights, until presently a little gong was sounded and the business of the meeting began.

The paper of the evening, for ability, was one called 'How to help the Poor.' It was read by Muir, a medical student in his final year, whom I knew slightly, and who I thought was not known by Clegg at all. He was a tall, fair, rather heavily built man, with a handsome, sarcastic face, and most infernal manners. Directly his paper began, the sound of his voice made me prepared to fight every proposition he made, and to contradict every statement. I felt as though I were listening to a fiddle played out of tune, and, to my surprise, from the way Clegg began to fret and fume directly the man got up, he was evidently as impatient as I. As Muir went on there was fidgeting all over the room, no one seemed able to keep quiet, with the exception of his little blue-eyed *fiancée*, Elsie Reid, who sat opposite to him full of open admiration, more and more impressed by her lover's calm assumption of knowledge. Before the paper was ended Clegg was jogging me violently with his elbow.

'May visitors speak, Tregenna? May I speak?'

'May you what?' I asked contemptuously, ready to be rude to anyone in the irritated condition produced by Muir's voice and manner.

'May I speak, I say?'

'Of course, if you want to. I warn you, Muir's a Tartar.'

Clegg shrugged his shoulders defiantly, and sat watching Muir as though he would like to spring at his throat. I was rather amused and very much surprised, for I could not imagine what Clegg knew or cared about the question of the poor, though he was 'Hail fellow, well met' with everybody. But when Muir had finished and Clegg jumped up to answer him, I was still more surprised, for some stronger motive than I knew of gave him eloquence. Not being a great reader, and quite unaccustomed to debate, he didn't say much, his sentences

had no superfluous ornamentation, and he went for Muir in a straightforward, dashing way, to which the club was quite unaccustomed.

'Gave it him hot, old man, didn't I?' he whispered.

'Very hot indeed,' I answered. 'We shall see you a Radical M.P. yet. I had no idea that you were so devoted to your poorer brethren.'

'Ah, you don't know,' he said with an air of mystery and a huge sigh, after which he became so absorbed in his own thoughts that Muir's attempts at a crushing rejoinder were quite lost upon him, and fell very flat.

That was the last paper of the evening, and the club broke up into laughing, chatting little groups. Mrs. Reay-Carter came across the room to us almost at once, and addressed herself to Clegg.

'How good of you to stand up so bravely for the poor dear people!' she said. 'You must join the club, you know, you really must, and fight Mr. Muir for us.'

Clegg blushed and grunted, not being accustomed to such praise.

'I'm better with my hands than my tongue, I'm afraid, Mrs. Reay-Carter. I'm not used to this sort of thing.'

'Oh, you dreadful man! you mustn't use your hands here. But come, I want to introduce you to a Miss Verney. She is so pleased with what you said, and she wants to know you. Why, what's the matter, Mr. Clegg, you aren't afraid of ladies, are you? Mr. Tregenna, tell me what I've done to frighten Mr. Clegg?'

I turned to look at him, and frightened he certainly did seem. He stared hard at Mrs. Reay-Carter, without saying anything, and whether it was the electric light or not, I could not tell, but he certainly seemed to be getting pale under the sunburn that covered his face.

'He's been overworking, I think, Mrs. Reay-Carter. Shall I take you home, Clegg?'

Clegg pulled himself together with a shake.

'No, thanks, old man, I'm all right. I was too long in the dissecting-room to-day, I think. I'm demonstrating, you know. Did you say you would introduce me to someone, Mrs. Reay-Carter?' And Mrs. Reay-Carter said 'Yes,' and took him away, while I became entrapped into conversation with a *soi-disant* poetess who praised some rhymes of mine in the hope



that it would make me praise hers. This lady kept me so fully occupied that I saw nothing more of Clegg until he came back to suggest that we should go.

As we went back along Princes Street, the June moon rose over the Castle, and a little wind brought the scent of flowers from the gardens. My examinations were forgotten for the time, and I must plead guilty to feeling sentimental, but I got no encouragement from Clegg. He walked almost silently by my side, and sat silently in my room when we reached it, looking out over the misty Forth, until at last I began to chaff him with having something on his conscience, whereupon he got up abruptly, and, wishing me 'good night,' went to his own room.

I was alone now, but not at all inclined to sleep, and going to the window, I leant out into the June twilight. Away to the east, in the widening Firth of Forth, came and went the revolving light of Inchkeith; westward rose the dim outline of part of the Castle Rock and grey, old Castle bastions. The city was not yet altogether asleep, and the voice of a passing drunkard singing a music-hall drinking song, and the sound of a rattling cab floated up to me faintly and refined. It was a night for romance and dreams, softening my mood in an unaccustomed way. I looked at the stars quite unscientifically, and vaguely wondered whether, after all, they might not affect our fortunes.

Which star was mine, and was it in the ascendent? I laughed grimly as I thought of any hard-headed examiner being affected in his verdict by the state of the heavens. It would go hardly with our future patients were we loosed upon them on that system; but, do what I would, the influences of the night were irresistible, and I began musing dreamily again. Who can wonder? The prose of civilisation is not read under the stars! Night is the kingdom of the dead, and they were all around me.

There is no more romantic ground in all Christendom than that which lay at my feet. Kings and queens have loved, fought, and died behind the grey, old Castle walls, within earshot of my window. Royal and gallant processions, such as the old High Street never sees now, have passed up close by, times without number. Did I say such as it never sees now? Who knows but what the simple traditions of the uneducated were nearer the truth than the dogmatisms of self-styled scientists? Some say that shadowy troops still ride up the High Street on

·Hallowe'en and revel in the old banqueting hall. Who was I to laugh at these things? Leaning out of my window there, with the night breeze blowing softly on my face and whispering in my ear, I could almost fancy that I heard the faint tread of horses and clank of steel passing up the Parade, and that there was a flicker through the dusky twilight as of signal fires, warning Berwick and Fife that by night they might yet remember past days.

From the past I veered round to think of my own future. If all went well, in another six weeks I should have the world before me, to choose my own place for work. Where should I go, and what should I do? It may seem that what to do was already decided, since I had spent years in working for a degree in medicine; but this was not so. No one else knew so well as I what difficulties were in the way. I thought of orthodox medicine as one of the most illiberal and bigoted of professions, in spite of the love and reverence I had for many of its teachers. Granted that this was due to the foolishness and ignorance of a student, still the thought was there, and I must not put it out of my calculations. It would be difficult, for example, for me to do well in town practice, hating and despising its conventionalities as I did; but where in the country could I get those chances I so badly needed of working at the proof or disproof of many things? Could I earn my bread in a city where older men said it could only be done by bowing down to the social laws of the people, whom, in my opinion, the medical man should lead if he were fit to be a medical man at all?

Pooh! It was too soon to worry over this. There were half a dozen chances during the next fortnight that I should not have any such point to decide. Any one of the Writtens or Orals might decide for me that I had another year to work before I could make a choice; and I looked out into the night again, and looking, fell asleep on the sofa by my open window.

How long I slept before my dreams began I cannot tell. At first I dreamt simply of darkness; then things became more formed. I dreamt that I stood upon some high point where the winds blew about me, and that powers, of which I knew nothing save that they were stronger than I, filled the air and fought over me. There was no noise, there was nothing to see, and the wind blew quietly and the stars shone dimly

through it all, but it was a battle of life and death, as it were of worlds, and I shuddered where I stood.

Then for a moment there was a lessening of the darkness, and I saw that I stood alone on the highest point of the Castle, looking north, and that the lessening of the darkness came with the flickering northern lights.

But from the sea there was creeping up a cold, clammy, white mist, covering all things except the Inchkeith Light. While I watched the light it crept slowly in and upward, till it floated before me. Then I saw that it was no light, but a face—the face of a sphinx, calm and cold, beautiful and yet hideous, with eyes that spoke of undreamt horrors, and could not be denied ; it met me and held me. But even while I felt that I must escape or die, it faded away. Then in its place rose Clegg, who tried to speak to me and could not, and to clutch me and could not, and a long hand came out of the darkness and dragged him back.

I awoke with a shriek running in my ears—whether mine or another's I could not tell.

The window was still open, but the night had changed. There was an easterly haar,<sup>1</sup> and white mist crept in and chilled the room. Clegg's face of horror was still so strongly before me that, growling at my own idiocy, I went to his room on the flat below. He was lying rigidly stretched on his bed with the look of dread on his face, which I had seen before ; but when I woke him he only muttered of heavy supper and nightmare, and said he would sleep no more. Morning was then creeping in, and we sat and chatted until the world began to stir about us, when I went to the Common Room, and, making a breakfast from the food left overnight on the supper table (for we supped at all hours in the Settlement), I caught the first train for Kelso and the Tweed waterside.

<sup>1</sup> ' Haar ' is the east wind coming in off the sea.

## CHAPTER III

## TWEEDSIDE

OH, bonny Tweed ! How many poor mortals must owe health and times of rest and sweet forgetfulness to you ! Surely there is no inch of your course, from source to sea, but has brought delight ! By ten o'clock that morning, knee-deep in Carham Water, with just enough south-east wind to ripple it, and just enough passing cloud to make the fish bold, I envied no one. Who could think of a night's dreams, or of the horrors of darkness and unseen things, with a blackbird calling in the elm fifty yards behind ; with a solemn, old, long-legged, contemplative heron watching one (still as the stone on which it stood) from the opposite bank ; with the fly thick upon the water, and the plop, plop, plop of the lusty yellow trout as they rose up stream and down stream ? The water whispered and rippled around me, a wood-pigeon cooed sleepily in the firs near by, and my jaded nerves seemed to steady and grow strong with every moment of sunshine and sweet air.

Then, for companion I had mine host, George Turnbull, the very sight of whose long legs and weather-beaten face would have scared the ghostliest ghost or bluest blue-devil that ever wandered down from the smoke of cities. It was a wager between us, of a lunch at the club next time he came to town, who would make the heaviest basket that day, and he chaffed me from afar each time he landed another of the fighting beauties. The odds were on his side, for he could wade deeper, cast further, and fish better than I, true borderer that he was. But the battle is not always to the strong, and I chuckled hopefully under my breath, having hit upon the right flies, and being aware of a thick two-pounder which I had coaxed ashore while hidden from George by a bush, and which now lay packed in moist bracken, apart from those in my basket, that, without it, looked only a moderate take. Then came a time in the afternoon when the sky was unclouded and the water unrippled, when the trout would rise at nothing and the heat was overpowering. At this we suddenly remembered that we were only mortals and very hungry, so we sounded a

truce and counted our spoils; George two dozen and a half and I only two dozen, but the fish averaged between a quarter and half a pound, and I still grinned to myself at the memory of the whopper in the bracken.

So we ate and drank and were hugely happy. After that, George having promised to fight fair and wake me when the rise began again, I fell asleep there on the bank, while a bee hummed at my ear that June came every twelve months, and that therefore he, at any rate, was sure life was worth living.

No dreams haunt me at Tweedside, save those of big fish and fairies. Even of them I was free that summer afternoon, and slept undisturbed till George woke me, to say that a big fellow had risen two or three times under the opposite bank, and that he thought they were on the feed again. So we went at it and the fish rose, and the lines straightened and the rods bent, while the whirring of the reels and the gurgling of the water eddying about our legs made the merriest music I had heard that year. Our creels were near full at last, and my arms and shoulders ached with casting. The fish were rising fast still, but we were there for sport, not butchery, and George was merciful to his weaker town brother. He suggested weighing, and we balanced our baskets, one against the other, on a landing-net handle.

Down went George's basket to the ground at once, too heavy, I saw, to be outweighed even by my trump in the bracken, but I could not understand his shouts until he hauled the big beggar out from his own basket, where he had put it and threw it into mine, when the baskets hung level on our rough balance.

We tramped into the water again, decided to stop when either man had another half-dozen, and with a cast of bigger light flies, I set earnestly to work.

Have you ever waded, in or after the dusk? It is very different work from the day. The river that was so bright and cheerful in the sunlight, changes her face under the shadows, as a cruel woman might. Her voice changes too. In the smooth reaches she mocks you coldly in an undertone 'as she slips by, and if you be wise you will not be too careless in trusting her. The shadows and the moon help her to make traps where, in the morning, there were none.' When you come to boulder-broken falls she is clamorous for you and strong. A slip among the stones and she coils round you and kisses

you, laughing in your ears and stunning you, till you may roll into the deep eddying pool, to lie at the bottom on the gravel, staring up with calm eyes through the water at the moon, while great salmon swish round you, and giant old eels watch you from their dark holes in the bank, to come out and see more of you by-and-bye. I have waded and swum in the Tweed many a time, and I love her by night and by day, but I know her too well to trust her after sundown.

Now, however, there was still a primrose light far down in the west. It was reflected from the water above us, where it lay smooth as steel for a hundred yards or so, only broken by the rings of the rising fish. Then came twenty or thirty yards of black shadow, and then broken light and shade, where I fished above George, the shadows being thrown by the opposite bank and trees. To be noisy at such a time was to be irreverent and foolhardy, and we chaffed one another no more. The water-kelpies were stirring and would soon be abroad. Stones, a little way out, took strange shapes, which changed if you took your eyes off them and looked back again, while a big trout leaping in the shadow hard by made my heart thump. I turned my head at the sudden splash and looked up stream. Far away in the broad, smooth, primrose mirror there was a mass, a rock no doubt, that I had not noticed before. I turned and cast across twice and then looked up stream again. It had moved a few feet, and was slowly travelling down. An otter or a log it must be, and I cast again. Still it came, slowly, quietly, swerving neither to the right nor to the left, and presently was lost in the dark stretch just above me. At that moment I believe that George called in a subdued way, to say that he had made up his half dozen, but I gave no answer.

A trout rose at my fly and hooked itself, but I neither struck nor reeled up, for I was watching the shadow where the Thing had disappeared. All the time it must be coming on slowly, quietly, steadily as Fate—a log of course, only a log—but my eyes travelled down the shadow and stayed on the first patch of light in its path. It came at last, as they say all things come to those who wait. It made no haste, it had done with that for ever. But as it travelled into the half-lights again an eddy made it roll slightly, and the light fell on something the sight of which turned me sick. I stood for a moment, and then shouting to George to look out, I waded deeper. Not that I

wanted to be nearer that Thing which was drifting down so aimlessly and so surely. I would have given worlds never to have seen it ; still, I waded deeper and deeper yet, until Tweed laughed under me and took me off my feet, but I was not for her that night. I clutched at the Thing as it rolled quietly by, and, gasping with fear, struggled back, to be met by George's strong hand a moment later and helped into the shallows. Then we lifted my burden on to the grass and stood looking down at a dead man as the light faded away altogether.

The shadows deepened and an owl hooted derisively, while the face glimmered white and quiet at our feet.

It was that of a young fellow, say twenty-five, tall and well-grown, handsome, perhaps, a few days since, now—— !

George dropped on his knees in the dewy grass and looked more closely, but shook his head.

'I never saw the poor chap before,' he whispered. 'Is there anything to do except to get him carried up to the house?'

'If you don't mind,' I whispered back, 'you should look carefully to see if there are any papers or other things about him. If you do mind I'll see myself. I shall be all right again in a moment.'

But George searched and presently stood up with a folded half sheet in his hand.

'There is nothing else, I think. Shall I open it?'

'We can't see here,' I said. 'Let us wait until we get to the house in the lamplight ; I am very cold.'

'Two of the farm hands shall bring down a hurdle, and we'll get quietly across the fields. I don't want my wife to meet us or to hear of it. Go and fetch them, Tregenna, as you're cold, and don't say what it's for until you've got them away.'

I shook my head. 'I don't know where I ought to look for them at this time of night, and I might frighten Mrs. Turnbull. I can walk up and down here while you go. It won't hurt me, and I'm better now.'

So George went off with long, swift strides up the slope of the hill, and I began my patrol up and down the bank.

There was no doubt that the fever and anxiety of the last few months' work had shaken my nerves badly. Objects like that which lay on the bank had been familiar to me for the last four years, but I was uneasy to-night. Once I found myself looking over my shoulder at the Thing after I had passed

it, and I was forced to acknowledge that I preferred facing it. Supposing it rose and followed me through the shadows !

Then a great wave of rage at myself and pity for the poor helpless body swept over me, and I knelt down as George had done, looking it in the face. It peered up at me through half-closed eyes, as though quietly curious and expectant, but revealed nothing to me, and presently George, having found the shepherd and a ploughman in the upper field, came back with them. Then I agreed to walk by the road and say, if I met Mrs. Turnbull, that George was talking with the shepherd and would be in presently—after which we parted.

I reached the house without meeting anyone, and before going up to change my wet clothes I looked in at the drawing-room door to let them know of our coming.

The tall shaded lamp threw a soft light through the room, and shone on pretty, young Mrs. Turnbull's face as she sat at the piano.

I managed to smile as I told her of our sport, but I suppose that my face showed something was wrong with me, since I was kindly scolded for looking so tired. I answered by saying that I had waded too far and got a wetting, whereupon I was promptly ordered to my room, and when I came down a quarter of an hour later I found the fire had been lit in the dining-room and hot toddy was being made for me and for George, who was asked if he had got a dip too, he was so quiet. Our trout, on two great ashets,<sup>1</sup> were brought in and admired as they lay in glistening piles, but neither praise nor toddy could make us sociable. I was constantly thinking of the coach-house, of the figure which lay there, and of the letter, unread yet, in George's breast-pocket.

At last Mrs. Turnbull told us frankly that we were two unsociable bears, and said that I ought to be asleep.

'I forgive you to-night, Mr. Tregenna, but you must be very attentive to-morrow. We can't let you think about your wretched exams. here, or we shall do you no good.'

'I am afraid I may have to go back to-morrow,' I answered ; 'but I want to ask George's advice about some of my affairs first. May I have one pipe before I go upstairs?'

'Of course you may, but that means I had better go off to bed myself, doesn't it ? I thought you knew I was a splendid one for giving advice !'

<sup>1</sup> 'Ashet' is Scottish for a large dish.



I stammered something vague about consulting her another time, and she left the room laughing. George, whose life was spent in the open air, and to whom nerves were unknown, was by this time very much as usual. He mixed me some more toddy, pushed over the matches, and put his hand to his breast pocket.

'We got up all right,' he said, 'and put It in the coach-house. I've got the key in my pocket. And now we'll read the letter.'

He took it out, but before he could do more the door opened, and Mrs. Turnbull came in again.

I'm afraid we looked put out ; I know George's face was a study as he sat there staring at her with the letter in his hand, and she began to apologise at once.

'I'm so sorry to interrupt you, but, George, I want the key of the coach-house. The door is locked, and I can't find the key. Do you know where it is?'

'What on earth do you want from the coach-house?'

'I think my parasol was left in the dog-cart, and I'll make sure if I can find the key.'

'It's in my pocket,' returned George. 'I'll see myself before coming to bed,' and he sank back with a sigh of relief as the door closed again behind his wife.

'I wouldn't like this sort of thing often, I can tell you. Fancy if the poor little soul had got in !'

He went out into the hall and listened up the stair for sounds of his wife's movements before he settled down. She went to the nursery as usual, to see the children and speak to the nurse. He waited until she had crossed the landing again and had closed her door ; then he came back, and, standing by the fire, gave me the paper.

'I opened it in the coach-house and read it by a carriage lamp,' he said. 'There'll be sore hearts somewhere to-night, and I thought we might be able to give them the news, but I don't know where to send. The boy was daft when he wrote it I doubt.'

It was a scrap, torn apparently from a note-book, with blurred writing done with a stylograph :—

'I have wandered by the river for an hour, and the face haunts me always. What have I done to deserve this? • Some say that the dead sleep and know nothing. There can be nothing worse than this. God grant this thing cannot follow

me. I shall know in a few minutes. Oh, what have I done to deserve this?—John Henderson.’

We were silent for a time and I was shivering a little. ‘Then I finished my toddy and spoke.

‘Evidently suicide,’ I said. ‘Probably some brain lesion. I dare say it will be cleared up at the inquest, which I suppose will be held since this is the English side of the Border. What do you want to do next?’

‘I sent a message into Kelso at once, but the boy won’t be back yet. I asked them to send in the early morning and take it away before my wife and children were about. They needn’t know of it, at any rate the children mustn’t. I may tell my wife afterwards, or someone else is sure to. Now off you go, and we’ll fish somewhere else to-morrow. How would you like the Eden? You mustn’t go back till you’re forced to.’

I tried to get George’s leave to wait up with him for the messenger, but he wouldn’t hear of it, and I went to my room. Nor did I sleep badly, although I woke with a faint recollection of having met Clegg’s face, and the sphinx-face of my old dream, and the peering half-shut eyes of the drowned man, in the hidden ways of sleep. But I forgot them in my morning bath, and George, coming to my room while I dressed, told me that the coach-house was free of its guest. It was a perfect morning again, and the breakfast-table was the livelier for another visitor, a lady. We fished the Eden all that day, and had music after dinner. Again in the night the sphinx-face seemed to meet me for a moment, but I slept well before and after it, and the next afternoon went back to Auld Reekie, ready for anything, and asking George to let me hear what news there might be of the dead man, concerning whom there were delays, since he had probably died on one side of the Border and was found on the other.

When I got back to the Rookery in the evening, I found it in an excited state, and on making inquiries, was told by hot and perspiring men as they toiled up and down stairs, lugging all available small tables and every chair in the house to the Common Room, that MacLeod’s smoker was coming off at last.

## CHAPTER IV

## MACLEOD'S SMOKER

MACLEOD'S smoker had been on everyone's mind for weeks past. He had won the great Derby Sweep at the Conservative Club, somewhere about three hundred pounds, and in a rash moment of exultation had vowed that he would give such a smoker at the Rookery as never had been. Having vowed that, he went off to London for a fortnight's holiday, 'And where,' as everyone asked, 'would those three hundred pounds be when he came back?'

So the House sent him a letter through the secretary, saying what it thought of him, with fine sentiments on traitors who went over to the Sassenach (half of us who sent the letter were English). Also we warned him that, come back when he would to us, empty though his pockets might be, he should still give that smoker. Whereat, like the jovial good-tempered fellow he was, he replied repeating his promise, with a twenty pound note enclosed, as he put it, 'not necessarily for publication but as a guarantee of good faith.' But when he came back it was a particularly busy time with many of us, for even summer is not all joy in a community made up largely of medical students, and the thing had been put off until to-night, and forgotten entirely by me. It was upon us now, however, and I gave up all notion of trying to work that night, for when a Rookery smoker is on, a man must either join in the fun or clear out for the night—work he cannot. So I joined in arranging the little tables, with the chairs about them, and hauled in cases of whisky and syphons of potash and lemonade, and dozens of beer, so that every man might have his favourite tippie, and scattered tobacco jars and cigarettes about, while MacLeod marched gravely from table to table, putting on each one a box of cigars for those who preferred them. He had consulted the seniors as to the propriety of starting with champagne all round, 'Just to put the gilt on' as he put it, but we were to have some sixty guests in, among whom might be men who would think it snobbish display; besides, as the

wise ones pointed out, one must drink something after, and what was the physiological effect of champagne, plus generous quantities of whisky, for example? So the champagne was dropped, and MacLeod contented himself with begging the committee, who shared his labours, to see that, whatever they got, it should be of the best.

When the room was ready, with the piano freshly tuned in the corner, and the raised stage at one end clear for performers, it was time to slip into flannels, the most comfortable of garbs, and most convenient for a June smoker in one's own place. So we tumbled upstairs to change, and by the time we came down the guests were trooping in, to be received with great ceremony by their host, who stood at the door in the dress tartan of his clan, as became a mighty man with the pipes and in the sword-dance, who meant to entertain them before the night was over.

We settled down in our chairs at last, and MacLeod stepped on to the little stage, with his pipes over his shoulder and the bag tucked under his brawny left arm. His fingers rose and fell lightly on the chanter, the streamers on the drones floated behind him as, with his head well back and his foot tapping time on the boards, he gave us the gathering call of his people. Soon every man's foot was tapping, first softly, then louder and louder all down the room. Highlanders got wild and began to 'heugh' as the tune rose, and at the end even the cold Englishmen sprang to their feet, and cheered him where he stood panting and flushed with the strain of it and the memories of the tune.

There was a jingling of glasses as fists thumped on the tables, and his guests jumped up and drank his health with Highland honours, one foot on the table, the other on the chair, feeling that it should be done some time, and that later perhaps it were less easy to manage, and now the smoker was fairly started.

Presently Reid, another of our men, of whom, alas ! you will hear more before I have done, sat down at the piano, and melted us all with soft music. Strange, to see some great fellows, of huge frames and insatiable appetites both for food and drink, lolling back in their chairs with half-shut eyes, and pipes taken from their mouths and waved gently to and fro, to mark their sense of rhythm, and their high appreciation of the melody.

Alas ! poor Reid. There were discords before you, and weird music of a kind you never yet had heard, but as your nervous feminine hands flashed over the keyboard that night you knew nothing of what was near, nor did I. Let us be thankful that coming events cast their shadows before but seldom, at least for our poor eyes.

Then there came a comic song, sung by Gilbert, whose face made one laugh directly he sat down and turned to us, and the song had a chorus which was excruciatingly funny, though I don't remember a word of it except in my dreams ; but we all shouted it that night, and encored Gilbert till he sang another so killing that we couldn't sing the chorus at all, but lay back and screamed at him, till our sides ached, while one man rolled off his chair on to the floor, and stayed there till the song was finished, because we were all laughing too much to pick him up. The smoke rose from a hundred pipes, cigars, and cigarettes, in clouds and streams and rings, and a hundred glasses clinked, for singing is dry work, and smoking is dry work, and so is shouting. Was it not MacLeod's smoker, and a Friday night, with therefore no lectures in the morning ? So the laughter and the buzz of a hundred tongues went through the room, and then Bayne rose to give us his famous sermon on the morals contained in, and the warnings given by, the epic of Old Mother Hubbard, which he did with the solemnity of a moderator and the injured expression, when we roared, of a maiden aunt. Before he could leave the stage his banjo was handed up, and its tum-tumming accompaniment rose with a plantation song.

Then came a call for Clegg, who was accustomed to give us love-songs and serenades in the sweetest of fresh tenor voices imaginable ; but Clegg was not to be found. No one had seen him since dinner. He was reported to have gone to the Infirmary to take a case. Where he might be now no one knew, and no one but myself thought much more about it. He would turn up presently, and any way it was striking midnight, high time for sandwiches and a little fresh air. This we all agreed on, and any of the big windows which were not open already were thrown up, while we adjourned to the dining-room, there to find and finish great piles of ham and tongue and beef sandwiches, while we sat on the long tables and discussed the performance, or strolled up and down on the terrace outside.

It was not until just as we went back to the Common Room that I saw Clegg standing alone, and looking at me across the room.

## CHAPTER V

## THE FACE ON THE WALL

CLEGG started the concert again with 'Mary Morrison.' Is there a sweeter song in our language? I had heard him sing it often, but he had never touched me before, and is it not often so? A man or a woman may sing tunefully and well, and you are ready to acknowledge it, but there is nothing more to say. Then, suddenly, but not to all singers, there comes a time when they touch you, the song they sing becomes theirs, and when you hear it, where you will, you think of them, and very likely say to the man at your elbow, 'Ah! you should have heard that sung on such-and-such a night.'

How is it? I stick to the old-fashioned theory that you cannot make other people feel joy or sorrow in your singing unless you have felt it yourself, and so, when 'Mary Morrison' made me feel sorry for her and her lover, and all lovers of all time, I said to myself, 'By Jove, Clegg's hit,' and waited anxiously to see what would happen next. For he and I had been great chums from the time when, as first-year students, we had met in the stuffy old gymnasium at the Old University Buildings, and putting on the gloves, had slogged one another for all we were worth. When Clegg had put me up to a wrinkle in cross-countering, and I had shown him a west-country throw, we were sworn friends, and had seen one another almost every day since, barring vacs., and even those we had often spent walking, climbing, fishing, or shooting together.

The whole room was still while he sang, which, let me tell you, is no small compliment to a sentimental song in the second half of a smoking concert, and I believe that many men there were half unconsciously trying to decide what made 'Mary Morrison' so different to-night from any one of the other dozen times that they had heard Clegg proclaim her charms.

The night was sultry, and the room was hot. When Clegg finished I moved from my table to the open window, and

settled down on the window seat, where there would be room for him when he came. He stood by the piano talking to Reid, who had accompanied his song, and only came down the room just as the pipes began to squeal, and MacLeod stepped up to do the sword dance. So I pushed the whisky to him, and offered my cigarette case without saying anything, but watched MacLeod as, the swords being crossed at his feet, he began to move round them. What a bull of a fellow he was ! One understood all the stories told of his dogged pluck and huge strength when one saw him dancing there. How lightly the great fellow stepped too. I forgot Clegg as I watched how MacLeod jumped between the swords, and went lightly from one space to the next, while the pipes droned away, and the men critically watched the flashing buckles on his low shoes. He was warming to it, and a nod to the piper quickened the pace, while the shrill notes thrilled through the room. Faster and faster he went between the blades, with never a false step, or a touch of back or edge to the end. Then a great shout went up, and I shouted with the rest, turning to Clegg as I did so. His face was haggard and anxious, his eyes fixed on the blank wall opposite. I don't believe he had either heard the pipes or seen the dance from beginning to end.

I was so afraid of others noticing if I did anything to rouse him, that I looked away and talked at random to the man at my other side. When I turned again Clegg had ceased looking at the wall, and was taking a long pull at his whisky and potash. Presently everyone was laughing and talking around us, and I edged closer, speaking almost in his ear.

'Clegg, what's wrong?'

I spoke twice before he took any notice, and then he started, turning to me as if surprised.

'Eh, what? Oh, it's you, is it? Where have you been this long time? Of course you were fishing. Any sport?'

Before I could answer, he seemed to have forgotten me, drumming moodily on the table, and then raising his glass again.

'Steady, I say! You aren't drinking potash plain, you know!'

I gripped his elbow from the back, so as to avoid being seen, but he turned on me like a wild cat.

'Who the devil are you laying hands on? Keep off, can't you?'

For an instant I thought he would strike me, but sat quite quiet, and presently his eyes fell, and he muttered an apology.

'What an ass I am ! I'm sorry, Tregenna. Don't mind me, I'm a bit chippy to-night, I believe. Pil. Hyd. c. Col. will be the tip for me, don't you think ? Bravo ! bravo !'

He shouted at the top of his voice, smashing his open hand noisily down upon the table, but there had been no performance for the last three or four minutes, and the men around began to laugh. •Clegg, always ready to resent any hint of an insult, half rose, but I pulled him down.

'Our guests !' I said. 'They mean no harm.'

His wild, shifting eyes, so clear and honest at other times, wandered round the room, and at last settled on me again.

'I believe I'm making a fool of myself,' he whispered confidentially. 'What shall I do ?'

Close by us a door opened on to the little balcony, and I got up slowly, stretching myself as I did so, and moved towards it.

'It's awfully hot in here. Come outside for a breath of fresh air.'

He followed me, and we stepped out into the cool darkness. Inside rose the jingle and the chatter. As we leant over the railing the prelude of another comic song began on the piano. Outside the quiet darkness brooded over all, save that, down in the east, dawn was already heralded by a low belt of paler sky, and the leaves close by us stirred, as a little puff of wind came up from the sea. We leant there, looking over the city, for some moments in silence. Both of us had cigarettes in our mouths, but I saw the red glow of his fade and die without his knowing it. At last I spoke.

'I don't want to interfere with any private affairs, but I'd like to know what's wrong with you, Clegg.'

He shifted uneasily a little, but said nothing.

'Are you seedy ? Can I do anything ?'

The song was in full swing now, and the chorus came roaring out. He turned to the door and swung it to savagely.

'What makes you think there's anything wrong ? I don't know what you can do.'

'If you don't know, then I don't.'

I turned angrily away to go back to the Common Room, but he stopped me.



'You aren't going to hit a fellow when he's down, are you? Wait a minute or two.'

I turned back and leaned on the railing again, while the song, near its end now, came out at the open windows with a rush and a swing.

Presently he began speaking again in an odd way.

'They're getting well on with those panels in there now, aren't they?'

'Yes,' I answered, anxious to humour him, 'the walls begin to look better.'

'Let me see,' he went on, 'one, two, three, four, five done now. They'll soon finish.'

I waited a moment while I counted the panels over to myself, for the walls of the Common Room, at first bare, had a series of panels running all round the room, and one by one these panels were being filled in by decorative paintings. I could remember four, but thought in vain for a fifth; but then I might be mistaken.

'I can only remember four,' I said. 'I suppose they've put up the last to-day, or at any rate while I've been away. Where is it?'

He waited again for a moment, and then spoke in an odd, high-pitched voice, starting twice, and stopping to clear his throat.

'My throat's awfully dry,' he said slowly. 'We must have a big drink presently. Let me see, what were we talking about? Oh yes, the panels. Yes! I think there's another one up to-night, but I may be mistaken, you know. There's a good deal of shadow there, and a lot of beastly smoke y'know. I think there's one up t'other end of the room. I noticed it just behind MacLeod while he danced. Deuced good dancer MacLeod and deuced swagger artist Murray' (Murray was the man who was doing the panels), 'but a bit decadent, don't you think? At least I've heard that said by men in the know. Decadent means creepy, doesn't it? Devilish creepy thing that last one. I don't like it, I tell you straight, and I'll tell him too. I may not be a kernoozer, but I know what I like. Of course I may be wrong about it. There's a lot of smoke and shadows about, isn't there?'

I shook my head. 'I was watching MacLeod all the time, and I saw nothing. I don't think there's anything there, old man.'

'P'r'aps not,' he said civilly. 'Those damned shadows——' and then breaking off sharply and catching me by the shoulder :

'You're an infernal liar. Speak the truth, can't you? You know as well as I do that the beastly thing has been grinning out of that panel all the evening.'

'Have you been drinking hard on the quiet lately?'

I spoke very harshly, for I was horribly frightened, and didn't want him to see it.

'No, yes ; I don't know. I can't tell what I've been doing these last few days.—I don't think so. About that picture, p'r'aps I'm mistaken, you know.'

'Wait a bit,' I answered, 'I may be mistaken myself, after all. Will you stay here while I go and look?'

He nodded, and going in I sat down in my old place and shut my eyes for half a minute, then quietly opened them and looked slowly at every panel. There were those filled up which I knew of, but every other was a blank, as it had always been. Even then I was not satisfied. I leant over to one of our men sitting close by.

'Hume ! Is there a fresh panel filled up at the back of the stage? I thought I saw something just now through the smoke.'

The man leant forward and peered up the room, then looked at me. 'Jim-jams, old fellow.'

He laughed noisily, I think because he knew me to be a steady man, and I laughed too.

'Thanks awfully ! I must stop it, I suppose. You'll help me, won't you?'

'I'll keep an eye on you, old chap. Nothing stronger than the wine of the country after to-night,' and with a wink he turned to his friends again.

I stood for a minute or two trying to steady myself. I poured out some lemonade and drank it slowly and quietly. Then I asked for a cigarette from the next table and begging a match from a neighbour struck it carefully and lit up. My hand shook a little, but I held my cigarette up now and then for a moment before me until I saw no movement. Then I went slowly back to the balcony where Clegg still looked moodily into the darkness, and, pulling forward a couple of chairs, got him to sit down.

'It's wonderful what a bilious attack will do for one,' I said

slowly and in as matter of fact a way as I could. 'Of course, one knows that sort of thing happens now and then, but it must be a vile nuisance. There's nothing there that I can see.'

'I know,' he answered.

'You know it's just a mistake now?'

'I know there's nothing on the wall. It's here just in front of me,' and from his voice I knew that he had not turned to me, at all, but was still looking over the garden.

I rose shivering, but sat down again.

'You're a Final man now, old fellow, and that makes things easy to talk over. It's better that you should be able to chat with someone. Tell me all about it, and we'll lay our heads together. What is this picture?'

'You'll think me ready for Morningside,' he muttered.

'Good men have gone there,' I answered, 'and come out none the worse, but I'd try a blue pill, and a holiday and several other things for you before Morningside. Try to tell me all about it, *all*, mind you, and I promise I won't tell a soul unless you give me leave. We'll go off together to the west coast when I've done this beastly grind.'

I don't believe I'm a sentimental sort of chap, but I think perhaps mothers have the sort of feeling for their youngsters that I had for Clegg just then. I laid a hand on his knee, and when he gripped it, and, I felt how he shook, I had to set my teeth hard.

'It's a face,' he said; 'a face that meets me at every turn now.'

'How long have you seen it?'

He was silent, and I could feel him shuddering again. I closed my hand firmly on his.

'Come, show you pluck, my dear old man. You're going to tell me everything, you know. When did you see it first?'

'Just ten days ago I saw it for the first time.'

'What were you doing?'

'I was sitting thinking.'

'Where?'

'In' Grosvenor's class-room. I was in the front row, and it looked over his shoulder at me. I only saw the thing for a few seconds. I wondered why the men didn't make a row about it.'

Now, Grosvenor was Professor of Psychology, and Clegg was

not supposed to be there, and was not in the habit of attending unnecessary lectures.

'What the devil took you there?' I asked.

'I've spare time, now that I'm taking another year, and it interests me.'

'Since when, on earth!' I wondered, but I didn't ask him just then, saying instead, 'I don't know anything of that course, I'm ashamed to say; but, if I get through, I mean to take it next session. There's a winter course, isn't there? I'll work it with you if you like. You'll take a holiday now. What was he talking about that morning?'

'Hallucinations. He was talking about objective and subjective, or something of that sort, and saying they were all tommyrot, you know, when the thing just looked over his shoulder and grinned at me.'

'Is it always grinning?' I asked, merely to keep the thing going, till I could think what useful question I might ask next.

'No! It's generally quite stiff at first. What do you call it—statuesque? It often looks lovely to start with, but as if it was in pain. Then the thing begins to grin and mock at me most infernally; but I think it's always in pain. It's much more with me now than at first. I can shut it out by closing my eyes, but that funks me, for I know its there still, and when I look again its always closer. If it touched me I should die.'

The banjo was going again inside, with a laughing chorus that seemed to me meant for both of us, and prevented me from thinking quickly.

'Well, you won't go back to psychology anyhow,' I said. 'Get some golfing, to-morrow, and something of the kind every day till we get off.'

The concert was ending. I could hear Reid at the piano striking the first few bars of 'Auld Lang Syne,' while the men pushed back their chairs and rose to join hands.

'Come in and shout,' I said, but he held my arm a moment.

'I wanted to ask you a favour, if you're sure you don't mind.'

'Anything in the world, my dear fellow.'

'May I lie on your sofa to-night? I know I'm a fool, but I've had a bad time, and it's worse at night when I'm alone.'

'We'll bring in your bed, old man, and put it by mine, then you can wake me if you want to.'

'Thanks, Tregenna. You're *awfully* kind to me. I couldn't tell anyone else, but I promised to tell you everything, didn't I?'

'Everything.'

'I can't tell you all to-night—only one thing more. You mayn't think me such a cur then. You remember that girl O'Reilly?'

'Of course.'

'I know she saw what I see, all the fortnight before' she died.'

## CHAPTER VI

### 'SKINS'

THE rest of that night passed quietly enough—what there was of it. We dragged Clegg's bed into my room and put it beside my own. We talked over his troubles quite carefully and methodically for half an hour, and I examined him as thoroughly as I could, in search of any marked lesion to explain his state. There was nothing I could find and, as we agreed, even I, not yet a graduate, could not well miss anything very obvious, with Clegg himself trying to help me. The face he spoke of came and went, according to his report, while we talked, and even sitting there by me he confessed that it was fearful to see. He said that the malice and cruelty of it was something diabolical. It made him sure of the Devil, he told me, and once he startled me by breaking out violently, 'What have I done to deserve this?' I was reminded of two nights before, and of the shadowy reaches of the Tweed.

But as the day grew the face seemed to rise up less and less often, until at last he fell asleep, holding my hand, and after watching his haggard face I was satisfied that he was at peace for the time, and I slept too.

When I woke he was still lying as I saw him last, breathing quietly, and his fingers had relaxed their grip of my hand. I looked at my watch and found it nearly nine o'clock. I had an examination at ten, but wanted both to let him sleep as long as possible and to see him wake. So I stepped on to the landing and, meeting the housekeeper, asked if she would let

me have some coffee and breakfast sent to the door, and she brought it up to me herself.

I breakfasted close by the bed, where I could watch him, and where he would see me directly his eyes opened. Before I had finished he woke, and lay dreamily looking at me without saying anything, while I went stolidly on, eating and drinking with a careful display of concentrated attention to the business on hand, till presently he began to chuckle unrestrainedly.

‘Good old Tree! You’re in fine form. What on earth are you tucking in up here for? Ashamed to let the men see what a pecker you’ve got? Hullo!’

He twisted about in the bed and looked around him.

‘What am I here for?’

‘I wanted you to keep me company last night,’ I said.

He looked at me, wondering, but said nothing and lay quiet some time, while I went on with breakfast. Then he spoke.

‘I remember now.’

‘Remember what?’

‘Last night, and the concert, and the chat, and—the rest, y’know.’

‘Well, it’s all gone, isn’t it?’

‘Yes; but will it come back, Tree? Will it come back?’

‘Don’t be a darned fool!’ I said hotly. ‘Get up and have a good tub. Stuart expects you to catch the 10.30 train for Musselburgh with him. I’ve told him you want a day’s golf.’

‘What else have you told him?’

‘Nothing. Look here, old man, I’m off to “Skins” presently, but I’ll see you to-night. You’ll sleep in here, and sleep like a top after a day out.’

I waited until he had tubbed and dressed, and we went down together, after which I went off to the Infirmary, leaving Clegg and Stuart hunting through the place with many strange words in search of a brassy, probably borrowed by a friend.

Reaching the Infirmary, I went to a side room off one of the wards, where a score of us, penned like sheep, drifted one by one into the presence of half a dozen diseases, and a smooth-tongued examiner.

‘Skins’ and ‘microscopes,’ the work of the day, happened to be a part of medicine I was fairly sure of. I thought that

with average luck I was safe, and the affairs of the last few days and nights had kept me from getting into the 'examination fever' that comes from over-anxiety. So I sat on the table and watched the rest until I should be called. By the window a man was hurriedly turning over the leaves of an Atlas of Skin Diseases which he had lugged up with him. Old Mick the Janitor poked his head in and shouted 'Forbes !' whereat the wretched man wandered slowly to the door, fluttering the last dozen plates over as he went, and dropping the book as he passed out, when it was at once seized by two other trembling wretches. Another man passing down the corridor from the ordeal muttered 'Lupus' as he went by, and tried to get out another word, but was pounced upon by the Janitor, and fled swiftly round the corner.

'Eh, what did he say, "sore what" ?'

"Sore eyes," he said. The curs, they've no right to bring eye cases up here. The Dean ought to be told !'

'Psoriasis, you fool ! Don't talk so loudly, or we shall be spotted and called up again.'

'He didn't say which, did he ?'—and the gabbling stopped as another man passed out.

A languid conversation was going on at my elbow, between a man who swung his legs by me on the table, and another who seemed afraid to sit down lest he should spoil the fit of his new trousers. He was surveying his friend carefully, and was not pleased.

'I say, old chappie, you haven't the ghost of a chance, going up like that. Why, you look as if you'd been up all night.'

'So I have. I've got an Oral on at twelve, and another at two. I'm dog-tired, and sick of it all. I don't care if they do spin me. It's not worth it.'

'Well, you might have dressed decently,' persisted the other, pulling down his cuffs. 'I tell you, it pays with him. Now, with Downer it's all the other way. I went up to him as if I'd fought through the whins to get there, and he said "Eh, ma mannie, this'll no dae ! Ye canna last, ye ken !" I had a dashed easy time ! But I told that fool Urquhart how to treat the two of 'em, and what do you think he did ? Mixed 'em, by Gad ! Went down on his knees pretty well to his tailor for a new suit—he owes him thirty quid—and then marches up to Downer in it. Downer gave him two questions, and a pickle

to examine—out of the jar, you know. Urquhart was afraid to touch it for fear of dirtying his coat sleeve, and Downer says, "Laddie, this is no a place for/the like o' you. Ye'll soil yer claes. Come back in anither suit—in a twalmonth, ye ken!" and Urquhart shunted.'

'Munro!'

The masher pulled his cuffs down a trifle further yet, and felt the position of his tie as he passed out, while his seedy looking friend turned to me.

'Have you any tips for a fellow? I've had no time for "skins," and put 'em off till this week. I don't believe there are half a dozen I can spot!'

'Keep as steady a head as you can,' I said, 'and don't take shots. I believe that makes him wilder than anything else. He'll start asking you what you see, at once, and lead you into all sorts of holes.'

The fellow was scarcely listening. His eyes wandered from me towards the door, and I saw his upper lip shake.

'Beattie!'

'Thank God it's over!' he muttered, and went out as a man might who had heard the verdict of 'guilty,' and knew the worst.

The buzzing went on.

'Well, I humbugged about, and couldn't get anything out of the case. There was a scar and there was a swelling, and the brute just lay there and grinned at me. The very minute that I found he was waiting for a tip before speaking, and was diving in my pockets for half-a-crown, up comes Tommy! "Well, Mr. Burns, what do you make of it?"'

'So I rotted about for a time, and at last told him that radical cure had been performed. "Yes?" says Tommy, "and what's this swelling, Mr. Burns?" "The operation has failed, sir." "Oh," says he, as polite as you please, "I'm sorry to hear that! Do you know who operated, Mr. Burns?" "No, sir." "I did, Mr. Burns. I'm sorry to think I've failed—but I don't agree with you."

'Then he told me what was wrong—I was wild! "Now that you know what's wrong, at least what I think is wrong, how would you treat the case—always, of course, allowing for the moment that my diagnosis might be correct, Mr. Burns?" says Tommy, looking as meek and as hungry for advice as it he'd just come up for a consultation.'



'Well, I'd looked under the bed long ago, and found long splints and bandages, pulleys and all—so I just answered pat, "Complete rest, with double long splints, and extension to prevent movement." "I think not!" says Tommy, grinning like the brute that he is. "The double long splints that are under the bed came from the next side room, Mr. Burns. Just to get them out of the way, don't you know." And that beast from London that was standing by just yelled.

"I don't think we need trouble you further, Mr. Burns," says he, and I bolted. Is it any use going on, d'you think?'

I never heard the answer, for my name was shouted just then, and I went before the examiner, whom I left a quarter of an hour later, feeling that at any rate one more river was crossed.

After that I decided for a walk, so I slipped into knickerbockers, took a book of ballads in my pocket, and started through the broiling afternoon sun for the Pentland Hills.

I pushed through Colinton, past Bonaly Tower, and up the hill slopes on the springy turf and heather. By the reservoir I threw myself down, stretching out full length and trying to forget what lay behind and before. The thin, shrill note of a field mouse rose near me; over my head wheeled and fluttered an anxious peewit, screaming hysterically. I waited with patience, and presently was rewarded by seeing, first one and then another of the brood steal quietly away. Here and there the grouse called to one another. A duck led her little flotilla of adventurers out from the harbour of the reeds, on to the great ocean of the reservoir, and I watched and listened to them all until I fell asleep in the sun.

When I awoke the shadows were lengthening, and I tramped away down the hillside, back to the dust and smoke and noise of the city again, to find Clegg and Stuart finishing off the cold meat with great draughts of beer, quite forgetting to mark down their glasses on the slate, put by the barrel for 'hat purpose, talking of stimies and bunkers, putters and cleeks, and vowing that golf was the only game worth playing.

## CHAPTER VII

## A NOCTURNE

THAT night Clegg came to my room again, and coiled up on the sofa by the window. I had put in a couple of hours' work, and was almost ready to stop, but wanted to go over a few diagrams, so I told him to take a magazine and amuse himself for half an hour, and presently lost myself in my work. But when I grunted my satisfaction, and piously expressed my gratitude at having finished for the night, I got no reply from Clegg, and turned sharply round to look at him. He had risen on the sofa into a stiff sitting position, and was watching a space on the wall as if his eyes were held there. They were unwinking, his pupils dilated, and the sweat stood out upon his forehead.

I crossed the room quickly, without saying anything more, and, sitting down beside him, took both his hands in mine. Presently they began to twitch and tremble, and at last, suddenly, without a word, he collapsed, sobbing great sobs that seemed to be torn from him, as he leant up against me with his head on my shoulder, begging me, between the sobs, to be patient with him for a moment, and not to think him a silly girl. I'm afraid I treated the poor fellow very much as if he were one, for I patted and petted him, talking as gently as I knew how to, and no doubt making an ass of myself in my turn, for presently he began to laugh half hysterically, and at last told me he thought I was as big a fool as himself.

'I wasn't so bad to-night,' he announced at last. 'I'm pretty right again now.' He crossed into my bedroom, where I could hear him spluttering over the wash-basin, from which he returned polishing his face vigorously with a big towel.

'There's nothing like a wash! You've no idea how refreshing it is, as my aunt told me once.'

He laughed over this very small joke and sat down by me again.

'The same trouble, Clegg?'

'The same, dear boy, but not so bad, thanks to you. I knew you were there, so I could fight it a bit.'

'Look here, Clegg, I'm going to keep my promise if you insist on it, but I should be very glad if you'd come along with me to-morrow, and talk the thing over with your chief.'

'I'll do nothing of the kind, and I tell you straight. I'm better to-night than I was last night, and I'm going to be better still to-morrow. Before going to my chief, or anyone else, I'd tell you more. But I'm going to be better, you'll see if I'm not. I'm quite sleepy now. It's not D.T., I promise you, and it's not overwork either. My nerves have got a shake, that's all, but I don't want to talk about it unless I'm obliged. You won't drop me, will you?'

'Not I; 'tisn't likely. I only want to do what's best for you.'

'Well, perhaps it isn't fair. I tell you what I'll do. If I get on all right, always improving, you know, we'll do nothing. If I get as bad again as I was, which the Lord forbid, why I'll tell you, and we'll talk it over quietly and see about getting some other Johnny in to puzzle it out, if you can't.'

I had to agree to this, and presently he repeated that he was tired and went to his bed in my room. I sat awhile, worrying the thing over, but made nothing of it.

That Clegg was an honest, plucky, clean-living, good soul, I knew without question. If he had been drinking at all, it could only have been on some sudden, new, and hitherto unknown impulse, for I had never known him anything the worse for drink. But he had said plainly that he had not been drinking, and that, for me, settled the matter at once. I put it out of my reckoning, and tried again. Hereditary disease cropping up? No. I had spent a month with his people in a quiet English vicarage, and was sure that the stock was a healthy one. Overwork? Clegg never pretended to it, or rather, perhaps, he pretended just enough to make one laugh at the notion; for, although he was an honest worker, and had taken quite a respectable place all through, he was far more covetous of 'blues' and 'pewters' than of class medals, and the only times I had heard him hint at overwork and its folly as shown in himself, were when chances of a good day's shooting or fishing came in the middle of session. Then Clegg was likely to feel that he had been overdoing it, and to disappear for a day or two, coming back very happy, usually with a good bag or basket to vary the Rookery bill of fare, and with great

yarns of the country, and big sighs for the life of a landed proprietor.

What was left, then, to consider? There was the chance of some obscure nervous trouble, or some epileptiform seizure, due to head injury. Clegg was always tumbling about. If he got a mount, whatever sort of a four-legged cripple it might be, he was never satisfied till he had made it jump—or fall. He was a regular crank on that point, and all the worse for knowing nothing about it. Directly he got a horse he discovered excellences that startled even the owner.

That he might have got a nasty knock any time within the last month, without paying any attention to it, was very likely, indeed. The more I thought, the more likely it seemed, and, thinking, I passed into the bedroom and stood looking down at him.

It was a breathlessly hot night, and he lay with his night-shirt open over his chest, and a muscular arm thrown outside the bedclothes. He seemed to be golfing through dreamland, for while I watched him he muttered 'Well holed' and, flinging his arm across, turned over on to his face. The shirt collar turned back, fell away from the shoulders, and showed a small mark low down on the back of the neck. I stooped to look, but could make nothing of it. It seemed more like a birth-mark than anything else, dark red in colour and of curious shape, almost cruciform. I passed on to run my fingers lightly over his head, turning the short yellow hair quietly aside, to look for scars or any other sign of a blow, but there was nothing, and as he grew restless under my fingers I stopped my exploration, and turned into my own bed.

My window was open, and so, evidently, was Reid's below me. His piano was sounding to a very different style of music from that of the smoking concert at which we heard him last. Dreamy, sensuous, passionate waltzes and impromptus of Chopin followed one another out on to the night, and I could imagine him swaying to and fro on his music stool in the shadows, for I knew he would have no light in the room, with his long body accentuating the music by its movements, his thin, spider legs curling and uncurling as his feet met or left the pedals, while his big, black moustache bristled over the pipe, probably long since turned out. A prelude of Chopin followed, and then, with a few chords in the minor, he swept into something strange to me; then his hands crashed down on to the keys violently,

and the piano stopped altogether. Presently, just as I began to doze, another sound began, a long, whispering, wailing, single note, swelling louder and louder till it seemed to fill all space, searching out every corner, and I knew that Reid had left the piano for his beloved violin.

The first note having died away like a call that had been sounded to rouse unseen things, he turned into the minor key with which he had ended on the piano. He had it now, this was what he needed ! I felt it as the weird air moved on, slow, irresistible, rousing new passion, new griefs, yearning desires for I knew not what, while with it all, mocking it all, overpowering it all, ran despair and a great dread. It wailed through the night, as though appealing to all heaven for help, and appealing with a knowledge that there was neither help nor hope. It sobbed round the house like a banshee, rising and falling like the wind. It pierced sleep, and crying its message to Clegg set him tossing and moaning where he lay. I got up hastily when I saw this, slipped on a dressing-gown, and, running down to Reid's door, tapped and went in without waiting for an answer.

The sound died away just before I reached the door, and at first I could not see Reid in the dark room. Presently I could make out his lanky figure doubled up in the armchair, his arms hanging over the sides, *his fingers still gripping fiddle and bow.* I turned on the light without ceremony.

'What infernal music are you treating us to now, Reid ? Is the devil in that violin of yours to-night ?'

'You heard it, did you ?' he answered, and tucking it under his chin, drew out the long call again.

I jumped at him and caught his wrist. 'Man ! you mustn't play those hellish tricks any more. You're giving Clegg nightmare, and he's seedy enough already.'

But Reid looked at the fiddle with a sort of admiration. 'Am I playing or am I being played on to-night, Tregenna ?—tell me that. As for Clegg, let him take care, or that tune may suit him as well as it suits me.'

'What does the fool mean ?' I gasped. 'Are you all lunatics here, with your hints and your humbug ? Is it a girls' school I've got into ?'

But Reid had turned sulky, and would say no more, except for muttering that in another half hour he would have fixed one of the best things he had ever done. He turned out the light, which I took to be his way of saying 'good-bye,' and I left him.

This little excursion had roused my temper, and I took a turn up and down my sitting-room, having looked first to make sure that Clegg was still asleep.

What was the meaning of Reid's speech about Clegg? Did it mean anything at all? I doubted its being more than a random word, shot out in vexation because I had interrupted him, bringing him rudely back to earth when his violin had swept him among stars—or hell-fires. For Reid was always an irresponsible, changeable body, affected by the weather, by everything and anything that went on about him, and never to be depended upon, except that his mood of to-day would certainly not be that of to-morrow, unless indeed he had returned to it through a dozen others. It seemed absurd to, in any way, associate him and Clegg. While Reid's mood of to-night was merely an exaggeration of what I had noticed a dozen times before, and while the air that had worked so much upon me would probably be a very ordinary sort of thing to healthy, steady nerves at a reasonable time of day, Clegg's condition was quite abnormal, and a thing of the moment. Clegg, too, was getting over it, I reflected, and, much comforted, I fell asleep.

## CHAPTER VIII

### JOAN OF ARC

Yes, Clegg was certainly getting over it, besides which I was working through my own small worries, and we had a quiet Sunday on the hills together.

I came hopefully from another exam. on the Monday morning, to find Clegg sunning himself in the gardens, beating quick time with his foot to the pipes which screamed on the Parade, where the Castle garrison was mustering, while he roared over what was intended to be a very distressing and analytical novel of a *fin-de-siècle* character. He began shouting his criticisms to me while I was still twenty yards off.

'Good Lord! Tree, what tommy-rot this is! It's a woman who wrote it, I'll wager, though it's signed Bertram Armytage. The poor soul worked it out on tea and coffee and muffins, you bet. She can't have breathed fresh air for six months. Why, the book just stinks of patchouli and pastilles, and incense

and—and—dirty paraffin lamps, by Jove ! The woman, the heroine, you know, just shudders and palpitates and vibrates and shivers and squirms on every page. She'll die in a double knot in the end, I'll swear. As for men, there isn't one in the book. Plenty of beastly dummies though, that I'd like to kick if they weren't such weak fools. Come for a sail, old man ? Crichton told me I might take his boat out.'

'Wish I could,' I said, yawning drearily, 'but I must get in and sweat in half an hour. I've got a chance now, and it's no good to come a mucker through my own fault. It's over this week, any way, my boy, and then off we go.'

So Clegg departed to find some one else ready for a sail, with his latest treasure, a most disreputable-looking bull-pup, at his heels, and half an hour later I got back to my room and worked well enough until lunch-time.

At the luncheon table was Reid, sitting alone at what was evidently a bad combination of breakfast and lunch, with a whisky-and-potash in addition. He was still looking rather sulky, but I was feeling so much at peace with all mankind, even my examiners, that I was careless, and said, 'What, whisky already, Reid !' quite innocently.

His shaky hand banged down on to the table in a moment and he turned on me as if I had bitten him.

'Look here, Mr. Tregenna, it's high time this was stopped. You're not my medical man, you know, nor anyone else's that I know of. There's too much of your interference in this place. Do you run this show ? Clegg may let you jaw him if he chooses, and you're a fool for your pains, but you'll just let me be.' He rounded off with an oath and emptied his glass, getting up to leave the room at once.

I stepped in front of him, and would not move when he tried to push by.

'Hear my apology,' I said ; 'I don't want to keep you for anything else. I dare say I am a meddlesome fellow, and I'm obliged to you for telling me so. In this case I spoke carelessly, and was half chaffing. I'm sorry if I've been rude to you, Reid, and I hope you'll think no more of it.'

'There, that'll do,' he answered, mollified at once. 'You mean well, Tregenna, you mean well, I've no doubt ; but you've got a devilish sharp tongue, I tell you, and sometimes I cry out before I'm hurt. I'm not quite well myself. Nerves, you know ; nerves. My doctor told me that a constitution like

'mine needs support—told me that years ago. He's dead now, poor fellow ; lifted his elbow too often, you know. Ah ! a sad thing drink, if you let it get the upper hand !'

I let that matter pass for a moment, and turned to something else.

'I wanted to speak about the night before last. That was a wonderful thing you were playing, Reid. It fairly frightened me. Did you say it was your own?'

Reid nodded his head gravely. 'Yes, yes, I suppose you'd call it mine. Queer thing, isn't it?'

'Queer isn't the word for it ! But I hope you'll let me hear it again. Might I come up after lunch for half an hour?'

'Not a bit of use. I can't rise to it except at night. I want the shadows and the moonlight and all that sort of thing, then the show just works itself.'

'Will you be at it again to-night? ' I asked, rather apprehensive of its effect on Clegg.

'No ; I'm out to-night and to-morrow night.'

I made a mental note of that for Clegg's benefit, but ended by saying something about the sensation the violin would have made at the smoking concert, to which Reid's answer, as he left the room, was a hurried and impolite reference to pearls and swine.

After lunch I tried reading again, but with no great success. I came to the conclusion that, like most men at that stage of the work, I was taking out of myself more than I was putting in. I wanted to take my mind off it altogether, and luckily I knew where to go for distraction from work, and for a change from the troublesome puzzles that were around me. I put my books away, so that the sight of them might not worry me into the blues directly I came back, and went off to ask for a cup of tea from my friend Caird.

Caird's studio was not far off, perched like an eyrie where he could see north, south, east and west, over the countryside. There he lived, and there, one knew from the results, he must work, though when that work could be done I never knew. Whatever time one hunted him up, one was always received with an outstretched hand and an air of happy surprise. According to Caird, one had always come just in the nick of time and couldn't possibly stay too long. Clegg had an apocryphal story of having gone up there one midnight, just as the maid



was turning out the stair gas, and to him she said severely that her master had gone to bed long ago. But Caird had heard his voice and came strolling out in a dressing gown, to drag him in and produce the food and drink necessary for such a welcome guest. At four o'clock in the morning he began a sketch of Clegg, as Phœbus or some such divinity, and at eight they sat down to breakfast. Clegg always tried to make us believe that he was pressed to stay for lunch, but we drew the line there. Then Caird's sympathies were as wide as the view from his windows, and he was an excellent listener and adviser, taking all things with a rare coolness—so no wonder one went to him pretty often. This afternoon he was more nearly busy than ordinarily. The girl looked doubtful, and said someone was with him, and she didn't know how long he'd be engaged.

But from the studio came his cheery voice as usual.

'Glad to see you. You're just in time for tea. Get into the dining-room for a few minutes, my dear Tregenna, until I've finished what I'm about.'

So I lounged into the dining-room, turning over a portfolio of etchings and engravings, and wondering vaguely how artists made their places look so jolly with so little trouble, until I heard the swish of skirts as Caird showed his visitor to the door—after which he took me into the studio, offered me cigarettes, and called to the servant for some fresh tea.

The first thing I had to do was to answer all sorts of questions about my exams., and a man in my position doesn't need much encouragement to say a great deal more than he intends on such matters. But at last Caird said he wouldn't ask any more, or hear any more about the thing.

'Not another word! It's not the thing for you. Here, look at my work instead.' He stepped to the big easel that had presented nothing but a canvas back to me, and wheeled it round. A face looked out from the canvas, rapt, ecstatic, wonderful. It was the face of a woman, but a gorget was roughly suggested about the throat, and a plumed helmet rose over the heavy black hair.

I looked at it with wonder,

'What a fellow you are, Caird! Who is it?'

'There you go, as usual!' he groaned, shrugging his shoulders. 'What does it matter who it is? Let it be anybody, nobody, a woman of the nineteenth or ninth century, what does it matter if it's well done—still less if it's not?'

‘Oh yes, I know your argument. It’s the work I must think of, and nothing else. I know I’m a fool at these things, Caird, but it surely must be awfully good?’

‘I think it won’t be bad when I’ve finished,’ he said, looking at it lovingly. ‘Of course one’s never satisfied, but I think I’m hitting off what I want.’

‘Now, can’t you understand, Caird, that when one sees a face like that, one wants to know the original?’

He took a brush and his palette, and put in a few strokes and touches among the hair before speaking.

‘H’m, yes, perhaps it’s natural. An interesting phiz, isn’t it?’

‘Why, it’s the sort of face for a martyr, man! That’s none of your common models, Caird.’

‘No, perhaps not. In fact, certainly not. It’s the face of a woman who’s not just the ordinary style, I think. You’ll come across her some day, if you stay in Edinburgh. In fact, I dare say you’ve met her already.’

‘Never.’

I spoke positively, but Caird laughed.

‘Don’t you be too sure. You don’t see everything you look at, and, besides, you’re just now very much on the look out only for types spoilt by disease, aren’t you?’

‘May be. Are you going to tell me who she is, or are you not?’

‘What a hot-tempered Philistine it is! The great British public is just the same; but I shan’t tell them who she is. I shall call the thing *Joan of Arc*, just to please the babies, but you may as well know her name now as later: she’s called Verney.’

Verney, Verney. I couldn’t remember where I had heard that name, and then suddenly Mrs. Reay-Carter rose before me. ‘I want to introduce you to a Miss Verney.’ I remembered now. Clegg was taken to speak to her at the All Souls’ Club!

‘Gad, you’re right, Caird! I’ve been in the same room with her anyway—at Mrs. Carter’s.’

‘Ah, that’s where she will have heard of you. She knows you quite well by name.’

‘Who is she?—what is she?’

‘A saint, my boy; an angel too good for this wicked world; also a fairly fashionable woman, and a passionate icicle, just depending on when you take her.’

‘Anything more?’ I asked sarcastically.

‘Ay, a very great deal more than a man can tell you. She’s my torment as a sitter—never two days alike. Why, I caught her in one of her saintly moods, and got mutual friends to plead for sittings. Last week she was so patient, and so transfigured, that I was ready to go down on my knees to her. When I thanked her and told her she was Joan of Arc to the life, she humbugged me most awfully, saying she *was* Joan of Arc, and all with a face as long as a fiddle. She didn’t turn up again until to-day, said she’d been busy, and wouldn’t sit still a moment. Screamed at the hint of that helmet there, and the gorget about her throat, and told me she had a lovely new bonnet just from Paris that would look a lot more *chic*; she’d wear that next time she came, if you please! As for expression, she had none, at least none of the sort I wanted. I could work at nothing but the turn of her neck, and her hair. These women are torments!’

‘And how does Mrs. Caird like these tête-à-têtes with passionate icicles?’ I asked.

‘Oh, the dear little woman. A precious lot she cares. She knows her own power perfectly well. Besides, it’s only to-day a tête-à-tête at all. Other days she’s been chatting with Joan to keep her still. Odd, to get that ideal of a woman fixed in your head, and then hear her gossip, the sort of five-o’clock-tea talk! But, to do her justice, she spoke very little until to-day. Nelly might have got a fright, if she had been here just now, instead of shopping.’

‘Mrs. Caird is far too good to be treated like this,’ I said gravely. ‘She has been very kind to me. She always gives me hot tea-cake if she’s at home when I call in the afternoon, and you’ve given me none. No’ (as Caird moved to the bell), ‘it’s too late now. It will be my duty to tell her of these things, and I will.’

‘What are you going to tell?’ asked Mrs. Caird, coming in suddenly and sitting down in the big chair. ‘Jack, give me a cup of tea, there’s a dear, if it’s decently made. I must have one before I take off my bonnet. How are you, Mr. Tregenna, and how are the examinations getting on, and what are you going to tell me?’

‘I’m very well, Mrs. Caird, thank you, and the exams. are getting on, at any rate. As for what I have to tell you, I noticed that was first in your mind, as well as last, and that you

asked for tea before you thought of asking for me. I don't think I've anything to tell you, Mrs. Caird.'

'Jack, do you call yourself a man, and stand there grinning while your friend is impudent to your wife? You're a disgrace to your sex!'

'I'm glad to find anyone who has the pluck,' said Caird, beaming upon me. 'It's more than I dare try to do. Come up again as soon as you like, Tregenna. You shall have tea-cakes for valour, and perhaps an introduction to Miss Verney.'

Then I said good-bye and left, regardless of Mrs. Caird's reminder that I hadn't told her anything worth hearing.

## CHAPTER IX

### A LEADER OF THOUGHT

ALTHOUGH it was perfectly true, as I had told Clegg, that I knew nothing of psychology, yet I knew Grosvenor, who held that chair, very well, and that very evening I found a note from him in my pigeon-hole of the letter-rack, asking me to call after dinner, which I decided that I would do.

'Shock-headed Peter,' as he was familiarly dubbed by the students, was a very interesting personality for me; those flat contradictions which exist in us all being more marked in him than in most people. Red-haired and red-bearded, his head was a perfect burning bush, and his temper was as fiery as his hair. Nevertheless he was a most astute diplomatist, interested, as he smilingly said, in many things more than in psychology, surprisingly frank at one time, but at other times working for his object in an unscrupulous and round-about way that made one imagine he must enjoy underhand methods for their own sake. He would mine and countermine, diplomatised and intrigue for nothing at all, and then chuckle openly over his cleverness to some intended victim, being not only surprised but grieved when the said victim showed the slightest disposition to profit by experience. He was sanguine to silliness, yet far-sighted and intuitive to an astonishing degree. He would promise heaven and earth to anyone at any time, if he thought it necessary for his schemes, which were many, and on failure had always a little bit of heaven left, to tempt one to

further idiocy. I have known him turn aside quite unnecessarily to do a stranger a kindness. I have never known him spare a friend who seemed to stand between him and success. One was taken up and dropped frankly, according to one's momentary usefulness or uselessness. When the appropriate moment returned one must be ready to reappear, or the Professor was hurt beyond measure at what he was pleased to term disloyalty. He never spared others, and, to do him justice, was equally hard on himself, but was, perhaps wisely, far too conveniently short-sighted to see that it was much easier for him to be enthusiastic over any scheme of his own than it could be for anyone else to be equally interested. Add to this that his passion for diagrams and double meanings went so far, that often, when he had expressed an idea symbolically, he looked upon it as a fact to be granted and acted on. When he had illustrated a scheme by a diagram, either he considered its value as proved, or he seemed to think of the scheme itself as accomplished; and having roused your interest with much argument and illustration, he disappointed you by dropping the whole thing.

A wonderful man he certainly was. Before Galton and Weismann, he claimed to have solved the mysteries of heredity; he had outdone Lloyd Morgan in his experiments as to instinct; he scoffed at Munsterberg as a novice with his psychological experiments; and for Wundt, his old master, and, indeed, for everyone else, he had but scant respect. Long before Whitman of Chicago, he said, he had declared the inadequacy of the cell-theory; before Sedgwick of Cambridge he claimed to have shown Von Baer's law to be a superstition. It was rumoured that he had independently discovered, as a boy, Newton's Laws of Motion and Mendeljeff's Periodic Law of the Chemical Elements; and as for his big book on Psychogenesis, which had been blocking production for a dozen years by its announcement in the publisher's lists as 'in the press,' they said that when *that* came, it would prove to be the Philosopher's Stone at last.

A wonderful man indeed, but I had well-nigh forgotten his hobby—and that was snakes—the study of whose psychology he had a playful trick of recommending to theologians who wrangled over the origin of evil, and there was always a certain amount of excitement in calling upon him, since it was well known that occasionally some venomous brute took to wandering, and was not always traced. Indeed, the servant

who opened the door at once told me, treading delicately as he spoke, that 'one o' thae beasts' was abroad again.

Grosvenor had various pithy sentences, which were scattered prominently through his house and his conversation. Having introduced one as his sentiment at an appropriate moment in chatting, he assumed that further proof of his sincerity was superfluous. This was the man I was going to call on, and you may imagine that he was always amusing, if not profitable.

Directly the door was opened I found it needless to ask if the Professor was at home, for the piano sounded, and his great bass voice rolled through the house. He was justly proud of that voice, and used it most impressively in his lectures. Also, on rare occasions, he made his appearance by special request at the more important University smoking concerts, where some 'little thing of my own,' for he composed, showed off his talent to advantage.

I was taken into his study, and presently he rolled in ponderously to greet me, holding out both hands and welcoming me with an effusion truly French—a sure sign that for the time he intended me to be useful.

'My dear fellow, where have you been? I thought you had deserted me altogether!'

Considering that the last time he had seen me he had been obliged to say that a scheme, in which I was an unwilling factor, had been dropped, I thought this manner of his a bit 'steep,' and did not respond with much warmth. At this he took me by the shoulders, and looking me sadly in the face, shook his head, with a touching air of resignation.

'Ah, my dear Tregenna, I see how it is. You have fallen away. You have deserted me. You have put your hand to the plough, only to turn aside.'

'Which plough?' I asked bluntly, but the Professor was not to be caught thus. Plain questions were to him scarcely less disagreeable than plain answers, and he avoided both as unworthy of diplomacy.

'No matter, I am becoming used to stand alone, let us say no more about it. You are full of plans for the future, now your course is at an end?'

'Not at all,' I returned, 'for the thing isn't at an end yet.'

'Ah, well, it's going to be next week, my dear fellow, isn't

'I wish I knew ! However, I'm hoping it will be.'

'And you've no plans ? Well, now, I wonder if I can help you ! I think I might make a corner for you in some work that I shall have in hand next month. Yes, you may count upon that. Look upon it as a promise.'

'Was that what you wanted to see me about, Professor ?'

The Professor was lost in speculation. 'Was it ? Really I can't say. I just wanted to see you, you know, and have a chat.'

'What is the work ?'

'Ah ! Yes. Well now, what would you like to do ? You must have a change, you know, after the work of this summer. Of course you don't think of touching medicine for a month or two ?'

I stared. 'What do you suggest ?'

'A fresh eye, my dear fellow ; a fresh eye. Leave medicine for six months, and you'll come back to it with new interest. Perhaps you have never noticed how rapidly I pass from one subject to another, and how varied are my interests.'

'Pardon me, I notice it every time I meet you.'

The Professor looked suspicious, but on the whole pleased.

'Ah, you have noticed it, have you ? Well, that is the secret of my unceasing pleasure in my work. Constant variety, and a rule never to think about a thing until the last possible moment—then, at it !'

I grunted, for report said that the last possible moment was often avoided or missed, and that the Professor made those about him endure agonies, by being always in arrears of work, never punctual at an appointment, and ever anxious to discuss all imaginable topics save the one on hand. But I said nothing of this. Anyway he got through a great deal, and I was very much of a fool beside him. I should get my wits sharpened, if nothing else, and I did need a change. He saw my hesitation, and the need of impressiveness.

'Come now, Tregenna, you are necessary for this scheme, which later on I will explain to you more fully. Racially you are everything I could wish, and the narrowing effect of your education will be overcome by time and a wider outlook.'

'Thank you very much,' I said.

'Not at all, my dear fellow. I shouldn't offer you work if I didn't see you were the man for it.'

'What *is* the work?' I repeated.

'My dear fellow, there is room for everyone in my scheme. Every man is most useful at what he is most interested in. Think it over, now, carefully, and you'll have to excuse me, as I had an appointment half an hour ago. I hear the man waiting in the next room. Good-night.'

It was quite true that someone was waiting. I had heard him moving impatiently for some time, and I left the room, but turned back sharply.

'By the-bye, excuse my asking, but what are the money arrangements in this business?'

He looked at me so reproachfully that I blushed, and really felt ashamed of myself, but stuck there in the doorway, and waited for his answer.

'And they call medicine one of the Liberal professions!' he murmured. 'Give me a piece of paper and a pen, and let me explain the position to you diagrammatically. Now, take money. How shall we symbolise money?'

'A coin might do,' I said drily.

'Excellent, excellent! We must find opportunities for you to exercise your wit usefully, Tregenna; we really must. But I prefer to put money diagrammatically as a serpent. Here's your serpent, then, to start with. Now, what do you want that for? It's a nasty thing to have about, and notice, my dear fellow, in passing, how we have chanced to hit upon a symbol also used especially in medicine. Does not that suggest the number of your medical brethren who constantly look upon the sacred symbol of their calling merely as representing gold? It's a very remarkable coincidence that.'

'But what do you want this serpent gold for? Again, in passing, remember the golden Hesperides, and the snake that was guardian there. What do you want gold for, I ask?'

'Well, I suppose you mention food, clothing, a roof, &c. Let us symbolise food, say, by an open mouth. Now, this serpent gold will pass more comfortably through the mouth, not as gold, but as loaves, fishes, &c., hence payment in kind, man's tendency being always to move in a spiral. Therefore we may be sure that in seeming to return to this primitive payment, we show sure signs of higher development. You follow me?'

'I'm afraid I don't,' I admitted. 'You may mean that you want some agreement whereby I get an equivalent for cash, but you've taken the wrong diagram. You've sent the snake of



Æsculapius down that open mouth instead of your money-snake, and there's nothing left of him. It looks rather ominous for my professional career !'

'Tut, tut, my dear fellow, your criticism, I notice, is always destructive ; rarely, or never, constructive. But you follow me, I know. Think it over, and we will talk about it again another time.'

The person with the appointment was audibly restive, and the Professor looked apprehensively at the folding doors.

'Well,' I said, 'I haven't a very clear idea of what you mean, but neither of us is a business man. I suppose this is something to be depended on, isn't it ?'

The Professor drew himself up solemnly and looked about the room for an appropriate idea. Presently his eye flashed. He had found what he wanted.

'Said Word is Thrall !' he repeated, pointing to the words carved over his door, and I left much impressed. But I never again had this comprehensive scheme brought before me.

The next time I met the volatile scientist, he had something else on hand, several other things in fact, and stared in mild astonishment when I mentioned our last conversation. He remembered, he said, my coming to him for advice, and he also remembered having said that he would be delighted to help me, if I could show him an opportunity—'and so I will, my dear Tregenna ; nothing will give me greater pleasure. But there was no specific arrangement. Promises are things which I never forget. Look !' and since we happened on that occasion also to be in his study, he raised his finger, pointing over the door where 'Said Word is Thrall' stood out as bold as brass—or at any rate gilt, could make it.

'Them's my sentiments,' I quoted, but the Professor did not 'catch on,' and merely said he knew that I should agree with him.

The important result for me was that I was kept in Edinburgh longer than I otherwise might have been, and so took part in what followed.

## CHAPTER X

MRS. REAY-CARTER

IT was the last day of the Writtens. I awoke early that morning, and lay listening for a while to a blackbird who had made it his duty lately to sing outside my window, as if to remind me of good times coming. Presently a cold, damp mass fell on my face, and, turning over in righteous indignation, I saw Clegg.

He was in flannels, and very wide awake, grinning at the effect of the wet sponge which he had pitched from where he stood in the doorway.

'Get out of that, you lazy beggar !

The lark doth leave his watery nest,

and you'd better do the same.'

The sponge had slipped between the sheets, and a cold shiver warned me that I was lying on it. I picked it out, and took a bad shot at Clegg, who didn't trouble to dodge it.

'Come out o' that,' he said, 'or I'll bring the water-jug.'

I knew that he was quite capable of doing this and more, so I temporised.

'What do you want me to do, O herald of the morning ?'

'Come out for a walk.'

'Do *what* !'

I sat upright, partly through astonishment, partly because the back of my nightshirt was so horribly damp.

'Come out for a walk, and don't sit staring there as if you never heard of a walk before breakfast.'

'I never did, from you. When did you begin to quote verse and go for early morning walks ?'

Clegg's only reply was to put his hand on my water-jug, so I slipped out and sat on the side of my bed at once.

'Where are we going, may I ask ?'

'Down to the Waverley to buy flowers, at least strawberries.'

I rolled on my bed and howled derision.

'Flowers—at least strawberries ! Tell me another. You'll be the death of me some day, Clegg ; you will indeed.'

'I certainly will,' retorted Clegg wrathfully, 'if you make

such an all-round ass of yourself. You'll be glad enough to eat the strawberries when they're on the breakfast-table, I'll bet !'

'Yes—and the flowers too, no doubt ; but I'll come. Oh, yes, I'll come, Clegg. Snakes lie among the flowers, so your poets tell us, and I'll come to guard you. Fruit too ! Let me see, are apples in season yet, or gooseberries ? Yes, yes, I'm coming at once,' for Clegg began to mutter ominously, and I said no more, but tubbed and got into my flannels quickly.

We went lightly down to the market, I, at any rate, feeling a freshness to which I had been a stranger lately. Clegg had been quite free from his troubles for the last two nights, and had thrown off the hunted look which had lately become almost his usual expression. We chatted, as we went of our plans for the following week, when we expected to get away, and we agreed that we were going to have a very good time. Reaching the turnstile, we passed down the stair into the market, and, if anything had been needed to put us into a good temper, what came to meet us would have served the purpose. For, toiling up the stair, came what looked like a big flowering fuchsia, on two slim, black-silk-stockinged little legs. It was only occasionally, when the owner of the legs wished to be sure of her steering, that a bonny, sunburnt, laughing, little face showed from behind the nodding blossoms. As the people around her laughed, the child laughed too, and somehow it seemed that a fresher, better world than the ordinary, had waked early that morning to fill the Waverley Market.

The whole place had a fresh, early-morning look about it. There were piles of vegetables, great purple beets, carrots, all sorts of green stuff, flowering rose-bushes, big lilies and fuchsias, and cut flowers of many kinds. We made for the fruit stalls, and bought basket upon basket of strawberries (after careful, critical, and extensive tasting) in such a wholesale way that one began to think portorage might prevent this from being a cheap morning's marketing. Clegg also invested in cut flowers to an extraordinary extent, and I had just suggested that it was time to think of breakfast, when he suddenly exclaimed.

'Oh, how *do* you do, Mrs. Reay-Carter ?'

He was quite right. There stood Mrs. Reay-Carter in a morning frock, so simple that one felt by instinct it must be very expensive, and with a straw hat that was a perfect flower-garden.

I shook hands in mute astonishment, for it was not yet eight o'clock.

'Mr. Tregenna too! The Settlement is well represented. Do you often come to this' delightful place in the early morning?'

'About as often, I expect, as you do, Mrs. Reay-Carter,' I replied, 'and that's not very often, is it?'

'No, not *very* often. I love all these flowers and things, Mr. Tregenna, I really love them all,' and she waved her parasol comprehensively over the potatoes and vegetables generally. 'Then these dear people too, you know. Sons of the soil, you know, at least the men are, and all redolent of the soil too, as George Meredith says (it *is* George Meredith, isn't it, or is it Owen? I do think him so clever, don't you?), with these things' (and she prodded a potato) 'all fresh from Mother Earth. What is that charming thing Tennyson (or is it Browning?) says about Mother Earth?'

'They've both said a thing or two, I think, Mrs. Reay-Carter. But may one ask what brings you here this morning?'

'Oh, I wanted a host of flowers for my drawing-room. I'm going to have a drawing-room meeting of the Society for Superannuated Cabmen (such picturesque, drunken things, don't you think?), and the Society is very hard up, and it will cost me a dreadful lot, because the Countess of Jura has promised to come and take the chair, and so I must have everything very nice. Isn't it good of her, Mr. Tregenna? I think it's so kind and nice, and yet those horrid Radicals want to do away with the House of Lords! Do you know the Countess, Mr. Tregenna?'

'I can't say that I'm intimate,' I acknowledged. 'I've had the pleasure of applauding her once or twice, when she was on the stage—dancing, you know. She did it very well, but I suppose she won't dance at your house?'

'Oh, dear no! How can you! Why, she's a Peeress and all sorts of things now. You mustn't sneer at her like that for having risen. Her past is past, you know, and one doesn't mention it. Besides I think it was very clever of her.'

'So do I,' I acknowledged, 'but I think she ought to dance for you. She'd bring you in a lot of money that way. The Superannuated Cabmen would flourish exceedingly. Try her! I know a lot of men who would come at five shillings, some even at half a guinea, I dare say. I'd take a ticket myself.'

Mrs. Reay-Carter sighed, but said, 'It wouldn't do, although it's very clever of you to think of it. I'm afraid that cat won't jump—as those horrid Americans say.'

This was not the first time that I had heard Mrs. Reay-Carter slip into slang, but, as on the present occasion, she always fathered it on someone, at least, when in society. I've often wondered whether, among her intimates, she used it more freely.

'Well,' I said, 'if I can't persuade you to try that experiment, Mrs. Reay-Carter, I think I'll be getting back to breakfast. I'm still in the hands of the Torturers, you know. Where's Clegg got to?'

'Oh, I expect he has wandered off with Miss Verney. I saw them together a minute ago.'

'Miss Verney! Is she with you? I want to be introduced, if I may be allowed the privilege?'

'Certainly, but,' Mrs. Reay-Carter looked around, 'I don't see her.'

No more did I see her, or anyone whom I might suppose to be her, at which I was almost annoyed. Clegg, too, had disappeared, though I saw that our purchases had not gone from behind the stalls.

'Well, Mrs. Reay-Carter, I'm deserted, and so are you! If you haven't finished buying, may I be your adviser for a few minutes? I feel it would be a privilege to help in such good work.'

'Oh, indeed, Mr. Tregenna, I shall be much obliged. I have such a lot to carry, I must get a man with a barrow. I'm sorry I didn't bring our own donkey with me.'

It may be that Mrs. Reay-Carter meant that I was a donkey, though not hers. It may be that she meant nothing so personal. She often said ambiguous things, always with the sweetest of smiles, not too pronounced, you know, because of the already mentioned need for preserving symmetry. I preferred not to investigate that question too closely, and turned the conversation.

'By-the-bye, what sort of a girl is Miss Verney? I know two or three people who know her, but I've no very definite idea about her, except that she's very beautiful.'

I had made a mistake in speaking so positively—or was it a mistake? It brought out Mrs. Reay-Carter.

'Beautiful! You call her beautiful? Well, she's a very

nice girl, though not exactly a girl, you know, either, but I wouldn't call her *beautiful*! But then men have such funny taste.'

'So they have,' I agreed with her, 'and I don't altogether trust the taste of the man from whom I got that. She may be very nice. I'm sure she is, if you say so, but I don't think she's quite—how shall I put it?—not quite *Greek* enough for my ideal, don't you know?'

I flashed a respectful glance at Mrs. Reay-Carter's classic profile as I spoke. It was beautifully calm and reposeful at that moment, and although she was just examining a fern with critical attention, I think perhaps she understood what my ideal was. Some women are so sympathetic, you know!

A full minute afterwards she smiled on me pensively, and I am sure that, if she had meant any inference to be made when speaking of 'our own donkey,' she withdrew it now. I didn't quite see my way to forcing the conversation on to the topic of Miss Verney again, but she saved me the trouble.

'Miss Verney's a dear girl, as I've said, Mr. Tregenna, though a little peculiar. I do love peculiar people, don't you? But then I'm so unorthodox. To be peculiar doesn't *do*, you know, at least unless you've a very definite position in society. Then it's *chic*, of course. But do you mean to say you've never met her? Well, I'm surprised.'

'Never, except that I understand that she was in your drawing-room the last time I was there.'

'Well, I should have thought that at the students' balls, or among the poor, or somewhere, don't you know, you'd have been *sure* to meet her.'

'She seems to be everywhere, then?'

'Oh, everywhere! She's very gay and very good. She's a Roman Catholic, I think. I know she works among the poor, and goes into retreat, moults like a snake, Mr. Reay-Carter says, and all that sort of thing, you know. But I do tell her that I think she makes up for it, you know, at other times.'

'That's very nice,' I nodded, 'and as it should be. Miss Verney evidently knows the value of a well-balanced life. I look forward with pleasure to meeting her some day.'

'Oh, I'm sure you'll like her. Now, come down this afternoon to the Superannuated Cabdrivers, and you'll meet her and the Countess of Jura too. You will be so useful! I can't get Mr. Reay-Carter to come. He says it's not interest-

ing, and he *will* call the cabdrivers superfatted ! I suppose that's one of his horrible professional jokes. Now *do* come !'

'If anything could bring me away from my work, Mrs. Reay-Carter, the Superfatted—I beg your pardon—the Superannuated Cabdrivers, under your protection, would do it. But my time is not my own to-day—except before breakfast. I must postpone meeting both Miss Verney and the Countess.'

'And you've never met her ?'

'The Countess ? On the stage, as I said——'

'Silly man ! I mean Miss Verney. Now, you and Mr. Clegg are such friends that I should have thought he would tell you all about her.'

'Has Clegg made use of your introduction then ?'

'Oh, they're quite chummy, as you horrid men say. I must say he's such a boy, you know, I think she's too old.'

'To be chummy ?' I asked, innocently.

'Mr. Tregenna, you're very stupid this morning ! You must want your breakfast, and I want mine. Fetch me a man with a barrow, will you, and then you may go.'

So I went off and fetched a man, and a barrow, and said good-bye. The very last thing Mrs. Reay-Carter said as we parted was :

'And you've never met her ?'

'On the stage, as I've said——'

But she still didn't mean the Countess of Jura apparently, and went off with a classical grimace. I was afraid that her nose would turn up, but it didn't, I'm glad to say.

I turned homeward too, and I, too, had to have a man and a barrow. As I paid the man at the door of the Rookery, I was still thinking of Mrs. Reay-Carter.

'No,' I said, 'I have never met her, but I will,' and fled hastily to the breakfast-table from the porter's astonished gaze. There was Clegg, but he had finished breakfast. My only comfort was that, having done, he couldn't eat more than half his strawberries. His cut flowers I never saw again.

## CHAPTER XI

## DISGRACED

I DAWDLED over the strawberries as long as possible, chatting to the other men, for I had no particular liking for loneliness just before an examination. Clegg, I think, expected to be catechised, but I let him be for the time, having gradually, through experience, come to the conclusion, that where anything seems of importance, unless you know just what to say, it's best to hold your tongue. So I chatted of things in general, and at last, with an air of indifference which was a fraud, said that I supposed I had better get ready for work.

'Well, I will say you're a cool customer !' growled Evans, another man in the same boat as myself. He had been reading all night, and now sat with notes in one trembling hand and a cup of coffee in the other.

'I should like to be,' I said. 'I know it pays,' and lounged away to my room.

Evans shouted after me :

'I'm going in five minutes. Let's go down together.'

'I shan't be ready for a quarter of an hour,' I answered.

'Don't wait for me !'

Panic is infective, and I had long ago found that it paid neither to go early, nor to talk things over at such a time.

I did not start for the place until the hour, being sure that if the paper suited me it wouldn't take me two hours to prove that fact.

A thunderstorm rolled up and broke over the city just before I thought it time to start ; the rain raced down the gutters in muddy torrents, washing the stone-paved footpaths clean of the summer dust. Every little mark and roughness showed as the sun broke through the clouds a few minutes later. I noticed a trifle which for the moment drove my work out of my head. It was only a roughly cut cross, shown clean and deep in the kerb by the sunshine, but it reminded me of the little cruciform mark on Clegg's neck, which I had never remembered to ask him about, or to look at again.



Thinking of this I passed into the Quadrangle, and up the steps to the Examination Hall.

'You're aye late,' was the surly greeting I got from the janitor at the door.

'What's that to you?' I asked hotly, and passed in, looking for my place.

I saw my empty chair, and made for it through lines of men. Here sat some hundreds of them, in every possible position. Some had settled down and were hard at it already; I could see their pens racing over the foolscap as I went by. Others had tilted their chairs back and were, one would think, waiting for a supernatural writing on the wall.

I sat down with elaborate deliberation, and arranged my papers, taking another look round before reading the questions.

The Examination Hall is full of separate, small desks, and a cane-bottomed chair at each. These desks and chairs run in rows all over the room, with just enough space between for a man to pass by. Theoretically, I believe, the space is enough to prevent misguided students from looking at another's papers. Practically, I think, a quick-sighted man can get the accumulated wisdom of his fellow on either side, and also of the one in front, if he will kindly help a little. Also carefully modulated whispering will do a good deal. The danger is from the graduates, three or four of whom march about the Hall, up and down between the desks, and may surprise one from the rear.

I wish to say that I have never thought it advisable to get a *collaborateur* at such times.

Up at one end of the place there is a dais, on which the examiners sit at another desk. The men who like the paper stamp approval after reading it. Those who are not suited, shuffle with their feet to express their sentiments, but do so in a guarded way, lest that too be remembered against them in the Orals which follow.

Having settled myself, I felt it time to look at the paper. There were four questions. Two I could do thoroughly, one fairly, and for one I should at any rate only get half marks. I made up my mind for this, and set to work after my own fashion.

After making some memoranda I started writing out my full answers, stopping often to jot down, on the spare sheet, some

other point which would come in later on. This, I found, gave the fullest answers and the best results.

Now, directly I sat down, I noticed that, while the men in front of me and to my right were driving away in earnest, the one on my left, a fat, lazy brute whom I knew by sight, was doing very little real work. He shifted in his chair, twisted about uneasily, and only wrote when an examiner or graduate seemed to be looking his way. My way of doing things interested him from the beginning, and he watched me narrowly.

Presently one examiner left the room ; the other, old white-haired Professor Douglas, took up the *Scotsman*, and our guardian Graduate having wandered away, my neighbour saw his chance.

'St ! 'St,' came from his quarter.

Now, his fat, anxious face was turned to me, but that sort of call might be for anyone ; I wrote on steadily.

'Tregenna !'

Hang the man, he knew my name ! I must answer, for he might only want a pen or more paper.

'Yes.'

'How do you answer the first question ?'

'I haven't done it.'

'Drop your paper on the floor when you've done it.'

'I'll see you hanged first.'

'Shove those notes nearer to me !'

'You'll be nailed, as sure as a gun. Don't be such a fool !' I wouldn't move my memoranda an inch nearer to him, but I didn't feel that it was my business to take them away, and presently he saw the situation, and began scribbling vigorously, looking across now and then, and afterwards going ahead again.

These memoranda were now a fairly complete summary of what I knew, and would no doubt be useful. I had begun writing the full copy and he got more and more interested.

Alas for the treader of dirty ways.

I had forgotten him and was working steadily when I heard a sort of gasp, which started at my left, and then ran through the whole room. Looking up, I found every face turned our way, while at the back of my left-hand neighbour stood a graduate, with his hand on the papers. He had strolled up quietly from behind and caught him red-handed.

The white-haired, spectacled Professor, being deaf, was last to know that anything was wrong, but now came tottering down, with his glasses up to his peering, anxious eyes.

'What's this, what's this, Doctor? Hey, tell me what's the matter?'

The Graduate said nothing, but, leaning over to my desk, picked up my memoranda with 'Pardon me, one moment,' and laid them by the three-quarter finished copy. The poor, kind-hearted old gentleman stared at them in grim silence for a few minutes, comparing them anxiously, while all the room waited, and my left-hand neighbour sat huddled and collapsed in his chair, more like a sack than a human being.

The suspense did not last long. Douglas saw how things were after a moment, and only put one question.

'Have you anything to say, sir?'

The white, shaking lips separated, once, twice, but the discovery had been too complete, and the shock too sudden for invention.

There was stillness again for a moment, and then the old gentleman raised a trembling forefinger and pointed toward the door. The poor wretch, white-faced and limp, passed out, branded. His papers were gathered up, mine were handed back to me, and with a little sigh of relief, we settled down to work again, while the sorrowful old Professor tottered back to the dais and his *Scotsman*, of which I don't think he read much for some while.

As the time slipped by, one man after another rose quietly, and, picking up his papers, passed away to the lettered pigeon-holes, where they were to be left.

When I had reached my last question, the one of which I knew least, I looked up at the clock. It was a quarter to the hour, barely enough for me even to make the most of what I knew, and I plunged at it again. Presently a voice sounded through the room.

'Only five minutes more, gentlemen. Make haste, if you please.'

I had finished by this time, and sat reading my last page critically. After all, I had given them enough to show that I knew the main points, even of this question. I remembered another point, and was adding it, when the voice came again,

'Papers, please, gentlemen,' and I added my last words with keen delight.

As I passed the dais, Douglas called me up.

'You were sitting next that man we sent out, I think, sir?'

'Yes, Professor.'

'I trust he is no friend of yours?'

'I only know him by sight, Professor. I don't know his name.'

'Pardon me, Mr. Tregenna, if I express my hope that you were not a consenting party to this unhappy business.'

I grew hot and uncomfortable. Perhaps I could have saved the man from this disgrace.

'I had reason to think he was looking at my papers, sir, but I neither helped nor hindered. It was difficult to know what to do, you couldn't expect me to report him?'

'No, no, certainly not. It was not your duty, Mr. Tregenna. It was a difficult position, sir, for a gentleman. I don't know that I would have done otherwise myself.'

I bowed, and passed out into the quadrangle, where I had to answer a crowd of questioners.

'Who was he?' 'What had he done?' 'What will they do to him?' 'Are you mixed up in it?' 'What was old Douglas saying to you?'

I answered them shortly enough, and as I turned away down the sunny side of the low terrace that runs round the quadrangle, I could not help wondering in what shadow my left-hand neighbour was hiding himself now. The shadow of that morning I thought would blot the sunlight out of his life for some time to come, if not for ever, and I walked away feeling as if I needed all the warmth of the summer air to keep me from shivering.

But most of us are selfish creatures. I am certainly selfish myself; and ten minutes later, when I turned down the Middle Meadow Walk to meet the pipers from the Castle, as they marched at the head of the regiment and played it up from the meadows, I was thoroughly enjoying the change, from silence and shadow in the Hall, to the fresh air and the skirling pipes.

First came barefooted urchins, lurching hobble-de-hoys, and seedy men, out of work and mostly out at knees and elbows, but stepping out briskly enough, for the moment, to those stirring, squealing pipes.

Next came the pipers, with the streamers of the pipes, and their Royal Stuart Tartan, fluttering behind them, and then the

drums, beating their monotonous thudding note that one can hear so far. After them the rest of the band, with their great brass instruments glittering as they caught the sunlight, and then the wiry, keen-faced Colonel, riding at ease, very much as if he sat in a comfortable easy-chair, with his sword undrawn, because, as everybody knows, he has special leave from Her Majesty, since his honourable wounds prevent him from drawing it easily.

Then tramped the white-tunic'd, bare-kneed men, hot and sunburnt, marching at ease after a brisk morning's drill, with their subalterns marching beside them, and the white moustached major bringing up the rear.

I stood aside and watched them swing by, and it was not until I had a sharp nudge that I turned, and found Clegg at my elbow.

'Did you get on all right?'

'Pretty well,' I said; 'I'm sure of an Oral any way.'

'Good man!'

He was silent after that, and we walked side by side.

The pipes had stopped, and the band struck up a lively air, that came blown back to us between the houses, and I felt so jolly that I joined in, and whistled it as we went along.

Presently I asked, more I think for the sake of saying something than because I wanted to know,

'Where do you come from?'

'From the Infirmary. Howell wanted to see me.'

I stopped short and looked at him.

'What about?'

'About that case I took you to see. You know--the p.m.'

'What did he want to know?'

'Oh, a whole lot of things. How I had treated her, and what I knew of her previous history, and all that. Why does he bother me? You heard what Richie said, and he had her in his ward for a week. His Resident says he's mad about it. Can talk of nothing but the ignorant impertinence of junior practitioners. Howell's not satisfied yet, and swears he'll see the matter through. Of course I answered his questions. I had a few notes of the case, and he was decent enough to tell me that he had nothing to say against my treatment.'

## CHAPTER XII

## WEST-END PHILANTHROPY

It is probably evident by this time that I am impulsive on occasion, a creature of whims and fancies. It was in this character that, after declaring my time was not my own, I thought it would be amusing to spend the afternoon at Mrs. Reay-Carter's, and to assist that benevolent institution, the Society for the Support of Superannuated Cabmen. I argued that I had not done anything charitable for a long time, and that it was likely to be amusing ; that it would please Mrs. Reay-Carter to have my help, and that she gave excellent tea. That I knew practically nothing of the struggles for existence made by a very necessary, and, no doubt, worthy class of men, and finally I allowed that I wanted to meet Miss Verney and the Countess of Jura, because I didn't yet know the first and had ceased to know the second.

When I told Mrs. Reay-Carter that I had seen the Countess of Jura on the stage (as Signorina Neroni—in private life Miss Jane Black) I had spoken the truth, and nothing but the truth, but not the whole truth. In my earlier student days, while taking a special class at a London hospital in the vacation, I had gone into rooms at the very dull and eminently respectable boarding-house where she stayed, and had chatted with her at table for a couple of days before I knew her profession. Then she twisted her ankle, a most serious affair for a member of the Corps de Ballet, and I had, with very little trouble, earned the warm thanks of Miss Jane Black and of her very estimable and corpulent Ma, by acting as dresser, under the direction of the hospital house-surgeon.

The Signorina Neroni had vowed that she would never forget my kindness, and had done so with a fervour as Italian as her name, but the Signorina Neroni (*née* Black) had ceased to exist, and the Countess of Jura would probably have no knowledge of that young person's commonplace past. ..

As for Miss Verney, I wanted to see her too.

Caird's picture, though no doubt much idealised, yet could have been suggested by no ordinary face. Then also Clegg was suspiciously silent about her. He was smitten by every pretty face he saw, and often even rather a nuisance, from the

necessity he usually felt of praising the divinity of the moment, while that moment lasted. Not only had he not spoken of Miss Verney, but he had shirked the subject when I touched upon it. Mrs. Reay-Carter's remarks were not forgotten, and certainly Miss Verney was, if not the first, at any rate the second inducement to visit Merrion Street that afternoon.

As I passed down our stair I met Clegg. He was looking wrapped in his own thoughts, and they were not altogether pleasant ones, to judge by his worried expression, but the sight of me in comparatively orthodox dress brought him back to his ordinary flippancy.

'You've got 'em on !' he remarked irreverently, stopping to stare. 'Where are you going ?'

'To the Reay-Carters.'

Clegg thought a minute and then brightened visibly.

'By Jove ! she asked me to call ! Wait a moment and I'll come along too.'

He was turning hurriedly to his room when I caught him by the coat collar.

'Clegg, are you interested in the Society for the Support of Superannuated Cabmen ?'

'I should think not ! What fool is ?'

'Mrs. Reay-Carter is—very much. I don't know whether you think her a fool ! I am interested, in moderation, so, I believe, are other people you know.'

Clegg hesitated. 'Now I come to think of it, I rather like the old blackguards, you know. At any rate I can't tell till I've heard about 'em. I won't be a minute.'

He turned again, but I still held him.

'Have you a card ?' I asked. 'Admission is by card.'

'Oh, your card 'll do for us both.'

I flourished my card at him. 'Admit one' was on it in large type.

'But you could get me in quite easily.'

'I know I could, but I sha'n't. You're too attractive, dear boy. I tell you frankly I mean to go alone. I expect to meet people I want to know, and I don't mean to have them monopolised. Good-bye !'

I went away, regardless of the threats and entreaties hurled at me. I was more serious in this than I wished him to think me, and only regretted having told him where I was going.

When I reached Merrion Street several stylish carriages

showed that Mrs. Reay-Carter had played a good card, and that the Countess of Jura was to have a full house.

I passed up the steps to the door, where I was met by a lordly creature who deigned to take charge of my hat, gloves and stick. My name was given to a second equally stupendous creation, who altered it to please himself, and sent it on to a third, who, not to be outdone, completely changed it and sent it up to the drawing-room door. I followed it in, and was much amused at the suspense shown on my hostess' face until she saw who was coming.

'Oh, it's only you, is it? I'm so glad.'

'Yes, only I!' I remarked with an attempt at pathos; 'but I'm glad you're glad.'

'Now you've got to be useful at once, Mr. Tregenna. The dear Countess has come, and my husband has taken her in to have a cup of coffee, but he says he must go off to keep some stupid appointment, and I'm afraid every moment that he'll run away and leave her. You're the only other man here yet. Do you very much mind taking his place? There must be someone to be polite to her, and the women keep coming up, and she's really very nice, only, of course, a little bit stiff, you know. Now you'll look after her, won't you, until the meeting begins?'

'If I'm fit,' I said humbly.

'Come along, then, and don't be shy. Carrie!' She beckoned her sister across the room. 'Stay here for a moment, will you, while I take Mr. Tregenna into the other room,' and I was led off.

We arrived none too soon. Reay-Carter, a tall, solemn individual, who was celebrated for his wide knowledge of toxicology, and who looked as though he had made the great mistake of experimenting on himself, with lasting results, stood on guard by her ladyship's chair, absolutely silent, and staring fixedly over his high collar at the clock on the chimney-piece.

A lady with a shaky smile on her face, which came and went as the Countess seemed turning toward her or away from her, stood waiting apparently to claim acquaintance, which her ladyship didn't look like acknowledging.

A mother and daughter sat near, on the sofa, stealing glances at this beautiful member of our aristocracy, and talking in low whispers, with an air of being in church. Several other ladies were scattered about the room, sipping tea and chatting briskly.



As for the Countess of Jura, she was yawning undisguisedly. Mrs. Reay-Carter took in the situation at a glance, and swept forward. 'Richard, I have come to drag you away from her ladyship. You really must keep your engagements, however much you would like to stay for our meeting. You may come in though, if you get back in time. Will your ladyship allow me to take my husband away, and let me present our friend Mr. Tregenna?'

Her ladyship favoured me with a cold stare, while the aigrette in her broad-brimmed hat nodded, as it might be in response to my bow. She extended the tips of her fingers to Reay-Carter, who lowered his eyes over them, and withdrew with evident relief, while Mrs. Reay-Carter, with a smile and an apology, went off again to relieve her sister.

I fell back a little, behind the Countess's chair, and made myself as comfortable as I could, while waiting her ladyship's pleasure. Where I stood I could look down on her quite well, without being noticed, and I took advantage of the opportunity to renew old impressions.

Yes, she always had shown herself a clever woman, and one saw it clearly now. So far as my masculine eyes could tell me, she was very well dressed, but it was not overdone. Her rings were hidden under her grey gloves, and of other jewels she wore none. Her dress was a soft, pleasant grey, and her great broad-brimmed hat was grey too. Whether broad-brimmed hats were in fashion just then, I don't know, but I'm pretty sure her ladyship wore, and will continue to wear, what she thinks will suit her, without any very particular regard for the fashion. And why should she not? Someone must set the fashion, and probably she thinks herself as competent as anyone else—and so do I.

Alas! few women are absolutely perfect. I must own to a fault, even in good taste. Her hair, when I had seen it last, was a silky brown, it was now several shades nearer golden!

I sighed involuntarily as I saw this, and I could almost have sworn that I saw her ladyship's shoulders shake a little, but she said nothing, and it was not until perhaps a couple of minutes later that there came the startling question.

'Well, how's surgery?'

'I beg your ladyship's pardon. Did you speak?'

'Of course I did! Did you think I was going to sit here

all the afternoon waiting for you to begin, Mr. Tregenna? I might have waited long enough, I fancy!’

‘I didn’t think your ladyship would remember me.’

‘Oh, nonsense! I knew you directly you came in. I’ve told Jura more than once that he must take me up to see you. I know where you live, but we’re so little in Edinburgh.’

‘Of course Lord Jura has his own friends here, and likes you to visit them.’

Up to this time her ladyship had been looking steadily in front of her, but at this remark, in which I’m really afraid she heard a stupid, vulgar note of bitterness, she looked round indignantly.

‘You’re as stupid as ever, I see! What are you standing there for, as if you didn’t know how to sit down? Bring a chair here and a cup of tea for yourself and don’t be silly.’ So I went obediently and brought one, and sat down, feeling rather a fool. Her ladyship had resumed her entirely uninterested air.

‘Let me see, what was that last remark you were pleased to make?’

‘I said Lord Jura would like you to visit his friends.’

‘Meaning that he would not like me to visit my own!’

I nodded humbly. ‘Yes, that’s what I meant, being a fool. I beg your pardon.’

‘You need to,’ said her ladyship severely. ‘I’d make you apologise to Jura too, if he were here!’

‘That is quite another thing,’ I said stiffly.

‘Oh, but I would though, and you’d be glad to do it. Why, you were quite friendly in London.’

‘I’ve never had the honour of meeting Lord Jura,’ I said, still as stiff as a poker.

‘Nonsense’ said her ladyship vigorously. ‘Don’t you remember going down to the door two or three times, when I was kept in my room, to tell him how my foot was?’

‘You don’t mean to say that he was that jolly, light-haired little beggar, who was always so shy and used to give me flowers for you?’

I hitched my chair closer. This was quite exciting.

‘Yes I do, and he’s as shy as ever.’

My chair went up closer yet.

‘Well, I’m hanged! And he always wanted to call me

Doctor, and I told him he was an ass because he asked one night if you were in danger. Well, I *am* hanged !'

By this time the Countess was laughing outright.

'Don't talk so loudly. People are beginning to stare. Will you apologise now?'

'Why, of course I will ! He's a jolly little chap. I beg your pardon, I mean—well, I think I mean that after all. But he told me his name once. He wasn't called Jura then !'

'No, he wasn't. His uncle, the Earl, was alive. Now are you satisfied ? because I think they're waiting for me to begin the meeting.'

'Yes, and oh, I say, do you remember the time that you put your foot into scalding water when I was down at the door with him, and how you screamed, and how he thought we were doing something awful and tried to rush up?'

'Yes, and do you remember how rude you were to him when he tried to find out what he could get you for a little present when I got well ? But I'm sure they're waiting for me !'

'Oh, bother them ! Do you remember how jealous I got ? (I'm not sure that I'm cured yet ! ) and how one evening when I was dressing your foot I was fool enough to warn you against silly boys?'

'Yes, you foolish fellow ! You were nothing but a boy yourself ; and do you remember——' Her ladyship's voice died away in a faint laugh.

'Yes, I remember very well,' I said. 'You boxed my ears.'

'Oh, I did *not* ! You were bending over my foot, and you lifted your head suddenly, and I just——'

'Boxed my ears,' I repeated firmly ; and it was just at that most unfortunate moment that Mrs. Reay-Carter's voice broke in smoothly,

'Lady Jura, may I introduce you to the meeting?'

I looked up. The room was empty, except for ourselves and a lady who stood by Mrs. Reay-Carter. Lady Jura's face was already as indifferent as before, and she rose with a polite smile.

'Mr. Tregenna, I have asked Miss Verney to let me introduce you. Will you bring her in and find a chair for her?'

I believe that, as the Countess of Jura moved slowly from the room, she turned her head for a moment to make a most unaristocratic grimace at me. I had known the Signorina Neroni do that, but if the Countess really intended it, she

changed her mind, for I was already occupied with Miss Verney.

'At last !' I said to myself, and we passed into the further room side by side, amid the applause that signalled the introduction of the Countess of Jura to the Society for the Support of Superannuated Cabmen !

## CHAPTER XIII

### BETWEEN TWO FIRES

THE meeting began with the reading of a Report by the Secretary, a grey-haired, spectacled spinster, who, I believe, had a very motherly heart under a forbidding exterior, and did all she could for the Superannuated Cabmen, though in such an unpleasant way that she was a terror both to them and to the Committee. As for me, while the Secretary read on aggressively, reporting the prosperous state of the Society in an injured way, while Mrs. Reay-Carter arranged her most classic smile, and while Lady Jura leant back in her armchair with half-shut eyes and an air of polite resignation, I leant back a little too, and proceeded to inspect my neighbour. That she was tall I had seen already, and now I found that Caird had not been obliged to idealise her face very much to suit his purpose. It was oval, and, if anything, too thin, with a mobility and restlessness which suggested the stock phrase 'highly strung.' I remembered Mrs. Reay-Carter's summary of her life, and felt that the face confirmed it. She was one who, whether at work or play, would burn the candle at both ends, if not in the middle as well. Her hair was black, and gathered in a great knot behind the well-shaped head. Her ears were small, and so were her hands. Her eyebrows were thin black lines, scarcely curved, her eyelashes long, and sitting as I did on her left, I saw that far back, a little above the level of the left eye, just before the hair began, was a white cicatrix, almost hidden by the hair being puffed forward over it. Her mouth was quick and in perpetual movement, her nose small and slightly aquiline. I only wanted now to see what eyes lay under those long, black lashes, and to hear her voice. She leant forward a little, listening attentively, but now and then shrugging her shoulders as the report ran on. Presently she laughed,

I think at the lugubrious manner in which the Secretary had stated that the character of an applicant for help was everything that could be desired. As she laughed she turned and looked for a moment at me. Her eyes were large and very dark grey, when she spoke her voice was pleasant and refined.

'That is very sad, isn't it, Mr. Tregenna?'

'That a man should have such an excellent character? Yes, very, but let us hope your Secretary has exaggerated it.'

'My Secretary! You don't suppose that I belong to this society, do you? I'm here simply like the Countess of Jura and yourself, just to give dignity to the proceedings.'

'Oh, really! From what I had heard of you, Miss Verney, I thought you one of the pillars.'

'What had you heard of me?'

'Oh, of your charitable work among the poor, and all that sort of thing.'

'My work among the poor? I know nothing of them, except what one hears at a meeting like this. Who deceived you so dreadfully?'

I think I must have stared.

'Mrs. Reay-Carter, I think it was. She wondered too that I hadn't met you at other charitable institutions—Students' Balls for example, I think she mentioned.'

'Ah, yes! I go to those things sometimes. I enjoy a dance at any time. By-the-bye, speaking of students, you're a friend of that nice boy, Mr. Clegg, aren't you?'

'Yes, but you mustn't call him a boy. One doesn't like being called a boy, Miss Verney, until it's no longer true.'

'Dear me, how sad! When we have been friends a little longer, Mr. Tregenna, shall one call you a boy or not? We're going to be friends, aren't we?'

'I don't know,' I said coolly, and she flashed round on me at once.

'What do you mean by that? It's very early to be rude.'

'I am sorry, but as a rule I answer questions plainly, and I suppose in that way one must be rude. I'm not the sort of man who makes many friends.'

'Very likely, I should think, if you always speak like that.' And she turned again, as if listening to the Secretary, who had been reading all the time and was just plunging into some astonishing statistics.

I thought I had been uncivil, and deserved the snub I had

got. It is one of my unpleasant characteristics to like or dislike people on very short acquaintance, and with no reasonable cause, and certainly I did not yet like Miss Verney—beautiful though I thought her to be. She was not only very self-conscious, which I think I may be too, but she showed it to what I felt to be an unpleasant extent.

Then her restlessness jarred upon me. She seemed likely to be disagreeably changeable. I thought her selfish, and altogether the more I considered her the more I wondered at Caird's unerring artistic sense, which had taken the most decidedly suggestive face, and put into it that which at once altered the whole character so thoroughly.

I was wondering so much over this that I quite forgot to be properly humbled by the reprimand which had been given to me, and was still silently speculating when Miss Verney announced that she forgave me, and was sure I wouldn't be so rude again.

After that she ran on with smart comments on the report and the people about us, to which I paid very little attention, watching her face idly, and thinking what beautifully bewitching grey eyes she had, until, glancing up the room for an instant, I was rather startled to see that the Countess of Jura had roused herself, and was watching us very carefully from her arm-chair.

What I might do didn't matter to her, what she might think didn't much affect me, but still I found myself watching her instead of listening to Miss Verney, who noticed it, I fancy, as soon as I did, being evidently accustomed to undivided attention.

'Have you met the Countess before, Mr. Tregenna?'

'Yes.'

'She isn't a lady, is she? She doesn't seem to be.'

'Who is rude now?' I thought, but I simply said, 'Don't you think so?'

'No! She looks vulgar to me.'

'Perhaps, Miss Verney, as the Countess still allows me to call her my friend, you'll address those remarks to someone else, if you must make them at all?'

She gave a scornful little laugh, but my continued plain speaking seemed rather to amuse her than otherwise, and she persisted in talking.

'Who's that funny man leaning against the door?'

I turned slowly when I thought it wouldn't be noticed, even if her remark had been, and was rather surprised to see Professor Grosvenor.

I say rather surprised, and I was no more, for Grosvenor knew everybody and turned up everywhere, always late, and always with an air of thinking that he ought to be somewhere else. What he could be dreaming about now I could not tell, but he certainly was paying no attention to the report, just finishing. He was in a brown study, his eyes rather wide open and resting on Lady Jura's face, as though they had fallen there and might as well stay. I noticed that even that self-possessed lady was beginning to fidget a little, and she ended by returning the stare, with interest, but with no visible result.

'Well, who is he?'

I apologised sincerely this time, for I had quite forgotten Miss Verney and her question.

'That is Grosvenor, our professor of psychology.'

'I like red-haired men, and his face interests me. Will you introduce him?'

I was glad to have a chance of release for a time, and, catching Grosvenor's eye, after some trouble made him understand that there was an empty chair by us. He slid into it with surprisingly little commotion for such a huge bulk, and beamed upon Miss Verney through his spectacles. She made room for him beside her, and in a minute or two he had discovered, so he told her, that she possessed tact, and susceptibility to her environment, such as would make her unusually sympathetic and invaluable for a social scheme which he was then forming.

'Your feminine intuition,' I heard him murmur (he could be very soft-voiced sometimes), 'would guide our coarser masculine wits. You would be the brain, we the hands. Now, let me show you diagrammatically——' but here a burst of relieved applause at the end of the report made me lose the rest, though I saw that Miss Verney had taken the bait, and was being enrolled and indexed.

The report was carried unanimously, apparently to the disgust of the Secretary, who sat down looking more bitter than ever, and then it became the pleasing duty of Mrs. Reay-Carter to propose a vote of thanks to the Countess of Jura for presiding.

A little duty like this was what Mrs. Reay-Carter delighted in. She had to stand alone, and could be sure of having proper interest taken in any attitude which seemed appropriate to her to assume. I have heard censorious females hint that she preferred male audiences, but if she did, it only showed her kindly disposition, in wishing to bestow her favours where they would be most gratefully received. I believe that even one or two of the ladies were touched when, with a ray of sunlight falling on her head, she drew an impassioned and pathetic picture of the poor superannuated cabmen who had passed their lives, figuratively, waiting on her ladyship, by night and by day, in sunshine and in storm, and were now, figuratively, served by her in their turn. At that point her ladyship's eye met mine, and the faintest shadow of a smile crossed her face.

I believe she thought at that moment, as I did, of the weary tramps home from the stage at night with her mother, when cabs were an unattainable luxury. From that state of things she had passed almost directly to the other extreme of, I suppose, several carriages of her own, but still it sounded very pretty. At least, so those said who heard it all; as for me, I only caught a phrase here and there, for we sat far down the room, Miss Verney tried to keep up conversation with Grosvenor all through, and the never-to-be-forgotten necessity for symmetry made many words inaudible, but the applause was tremendous.

The Countess's remarks were addressed only to Mrs. Reay-Carter and the Secretary, but one guessed them very much to the point, judging by the grim face of the Secretary and Mrs. Reay-Carter's beaming smile.

Our hostess at last arose, and announced that her ladyship wished to substitute a donation for a speech, at which there was more applause than ever, and the meeting ended.

Mrs. Reay-Carter smiled across the room to Professor Grosvenor, who, going up, was introduced to the Countess.

I turned to see how this desertion would affect Miss Verney. She was not looking pleased, but she seemed possessed of some philosophy, and was good enough to notice me again.

'What a clever man your Professor is! What wonderful imagination!'

'Wonderful!' I agreed.



'And what persuasion he has ! I declare I think he could make me believe anything he chose !'

'I dare say he could,' I answered.

'How suggestive all his remarks are !'

'Of what ?' I asked.

'Oh, of everything, don't you think ?'

'They suggest a great deal, certainly,' I allowed.

'And then he's so sympathetic and appreciative ! , I feel as if no one had ever understood me before.'

'How nice !' I got up to leave her, for her ladyship had looked in my direction, and I saw she was going.

She moved toward the door, with Mrs. Reay-Carter on one hand and the Professor on the other.

As I drew near the two were talking to her together.

'So very good of your ladyship to spare time,' Mrs. Reay-Carter said.

'I would like to show you that diagrammatically,' put in the Professor, 'with advantages such as your ladyship has——' but her ladyship saw me coming, and made an end of it.

'Some other time I shall be very glad, Professor. Mrs. Reay-Carter, pray do not let me take you from your friends. I am going to ask Mr. Tregenna to see me to my carriage.'

I said that I should be very glad, and shaking hands with Mrs. Reay-Carter, followed her ladyship down the stair.

She was looking very sick of it all as I put her into her carriage, and, in fact, I told her so.

She shrugged her shoulders quietly.

'I can't help it ! I do get sick of these people. They all have their own fish to fry, and all want me to help.'

'"With advantages such as your ladyship has,"' I quoted.

'Oh bother ! Do you know, Mr. Tregenna, I sometimes think I could do more alone.'

'This is heresy !' I said. 'You know nothing of the beauties of co-operation.'

'What's that ?'

'Well, some say it's getting other people to do your work for you.'

'Oh, I thought it meant getting into one another's way !'

'Where did you get that notion from ? But tell me, if you don't mind, what on earth brought you here this afternoon ?'

'Don't you know ?'

'I can't imagine.'

The Countess bent forward a little.

'My dear old Dad was a cabman. Good bye. Come and meet Jura next week, will you? I shall be off duty on Wednesday afternoon. Home!' The pair of handsome blacks pranced off and left me bowing on the kerb.

'I'm not sure that you aren't the best of the lot!' I muttered, and walked slowly home too.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CLEGG'S TEA PARTY

THE following morning, when I went down to breakfast, I found letters waiting for me, and among them one from George Turnbull. He wrote to tell me that he would have to be in Edinburgh two days later, and hoped I would lunch with him at his club. He also spoke in a gloomy way of the weather and the prospects of harvest, but he always did that. When I knew him first I was so much frightened by the prospect of impending ruin for all farmers that I used to look mournfully at his inviting breakfast-table, and feel as if I were taking bread out of the children's mouths. Soon, I feared, nothing but Tweed trout and rabbits would be left for them. But somehow things go on, and the farmers cling to their farms and to life, and are jolly and hospitable, though how they manage it I'm sure I cannot tell you. This year, George wrote, it had been very fine weather so far—much too fine, in fact. There had been scarcely enough rain, and straw would be short. Still, things wouldn't be so bad, but that one knew the rain had to come, and he expected floods early in September. However, one must remember that our weather makes Scotsmen what they are (obviously something to be thankful for!), but weather, he concluded, was a queer thing! Speaking of September reminded him of partridges. Could I come over for a day or two early in September, and bring Clegg with me? George had admired Clegg from the day that active young man had astonished him with a very quick right and left, bringing down with his left a bird that George had, for a wonder, missed clean.

Of course, he said, it would be too soon for us to decide

finally, but they wished us to remember that we should be welcome. Also Mrs. Turnbull sent her kind regards, and told him to remind me that I had promised to send a card directly the lists were up. She was sure I was going to get through easily, but added in her own writing, that if the examiners were so stupid as to make a mistake and spin me, I must come down at once for a rest.

Last came a postscript from George.

'The Procurator Fiscal held an inquiry in Kelso on that poor lad Henderson. There is no doubt that he was mad, and, of course, that he committed suicide. They found that he had been queer for some days. His folk live some miles up stream. He was an Arts student in Edinburgh, but I suppose you had never met him?'

I was sitting at the breakfast-table reading this, when Clegg came in, and, after ringing for porridge, he sat down by me. I was on the point of handing him George's letter, but did not. I had never spoken to him of the end to our day's fishing. I don't quite know why, but I think because I did not care to remind him in any way of that time, although he seemed perfectly well again. I gave him Turnbull's message, and we agreed that it would be great sport to go down. Then I went on reading my other letters, while Clegg got through his porridge, and worked on to a big plateful of eggs and bacon.

Presently he spoke.

'I say! Are you using your tea-service this afternoon?'

'No,' I said, and opened another letter.

I had a particularly pretty tea-service of my own, which usually stood in a cabinet, and was produced only on state occasions, when I wished to do special honour to lady visitors, who sometimes favoured our rooms with their presence at afternoon tea (always chaperoned, of course), 'Just to see how those boys live, don't you know.'

'I can have it, then?'

'Yes, if you'll take the trouble to wash it yourself. I don't let it go to the kitchen, and the last time you sent it down they cracked a cup.'

'All right! Thanks awfully.'

I went on with my letters, which included three cards from tailors, who expressed their willingness to sell me or lend me (for a consideration) robes for the graduation ceremonial. Also a little bill, with a memorandum to the effect that my creditor

proposed to call upon me, and wait, he having failed to meet me on other occasions: 'He *may* wait—for a day or two,' I muttered. 'Thank goodness all that is likely to be over in a few days now!' and I crammed all the letters into my blazer pocket.

Clegg had finished breakfast and was playing with a spoon. I knew perfectly well what was troubling him. Now that he had my tea-service he thought he must have me too, and he didn't particularly want me. On the other hand, although I sincerely hope I don't often push myself where I'm not welcome, I quite meant to accept the invitation, which was almost bound to be given.

'You've got an Oral on this afternoon, haven't you, Tree?'

'Yes, at two-thirty.'

He brightened a little, and I couldn't help grinning to myself.

'You'll want a walk after that?'

'Yes, I think I shall stroll until four.'

'Ah, you've got something else on at four?'

'Yes—at least I'm going to read.'

'Oh! that's a pity. I was going to ask you if you'd care to come in and meet some people in my room, at about four-thirty. But of course you can't drop work for anything of that kind now.'

'Who are coming?' I asked, carelessly.

'Well, Mrs. Reay-Carter is going to look me up, and she spoke of bringing someone with her, perhaps, and I asked Reid to come in and play to them, and perhaps some other fellow may drop in.'

'Ah! by-the-bye, I met Miss Verney yesterday afternoon, and I believe she said something about coming.'

'P'raps,' said Clegg, getting up from the table. 'Sorry you can't—'

'Oh, I think I will, thanks. It's no good setting to work again at once. I shall want a cup of tea.'

Clegg tried to say something polite and went off. I didn't see him again until the afternoon, when I presented myself at his room.

Before that, I went for my Oral, the last step in the examination. It was very much like other Orals, and I was getting accustomed to them. One went before two examiners, one of whom usually, in my case at any rate, found occasion to tell

me, just for encouragement, I suppose, that my paper had not been brilliant, which, as a rule, I knew already. Sometimes the other examiner sat and blinked, sometimes he went off altogether, although I believe the regulations stipulate that two examiners shall always be present.

One is supposed to question, the other to mark. The most attentive marker I ever had was very deaf, and marked me all wrong, I believe. They usually had the air of being intensely bored, which I dare say they were, and of wishing to get through with it, in which I always joined them.

I sometimes suspected them of thinking, if not of saying, 'Here's another fool!' as I came into their presence, and this so depressed me that I very often justified their thought.

As a rule they were not easily surprised at any answer one could give—provided it were the wrong one. Glimmerings of astonishment were only shown when one told them what they wanted to know. Then they were apt to look at one another with a startled incredulity, and to push their inquiries into such minute detail as should serve to show the shallowness of one's knowledge. I never had an examiner rude to me; I often found them astonishingly considerate, they taking into account the undoubted fact that all but the very good men make greater fools of themselves at such times than they do in the ordinary affairs of life.

This particular afternoon I was actually congratulated on my paper, and was so encouraged by the unusual event, that I went decently through the rest, and came away with quite a reasonable hope of having got through.

After this I went for an hour's walk, and then, having made myself presentable, marched to Clegg's room.

When I got there I found an addition to the company which certainly I had not expected.

It seems that Mrs. Reay-Carter and Miss Verney, on their way up together, had met Muir, Clegg's antagonist of the Wit and Wisdom Club. Mrs. Reay-Carter had stopped to speak of something, and, as far as I could make out, from what she told me in an aside, Miss Verney had taken the opportunity to ask him if he would join them. She had not mentioned Clegg's name in doing so, simply saying that they were going to call on a friend, and when Mrs. Reay-Carter had spoken of him, as soon as possible after, Muir didn't seem to remember. To do him justice, he looked as if he felt his position rather unpleasantly

now, and was punctiliously polite, while Clegg, obeying his hospitable instincts, was doing all he could to set everyone at ease. He was busily making tea, at which Miss Verney was helping him, while Muir and Reid watched them, and were scarcely civil to Mrs. Reay-Carter, who had apparently despaired of attention and wandered round the room admiring and criticising, with her glasses raised occasionally in inquiry. The only other person there was a lady, who sat by the window, gazing out with a rapt expression, to whom I was presently introduced, and who, I found, was called Miss Jamieson.

Seeing that Clegg didn't want any more help, that Mrs. Reay-Carter was restless, and that Muir and Reid had their attention fully occupied, I tried to entertain Miss Jamieson, and began by asking her what she thought of our view. She clasped her hands ecstatically and writhed a little.

'Ah! Mr. Tregenna, to have this always before you! How stimulating it must be!'

'It's very pleasant,' I said.

'Pleasant! Oh, if I had this before me, I should sit and sit looking at it for ever!'

'We have to go downstairs for our meals,' I explained.

'Meals! How can you leave this to eat?'

'Eat! I should think he does, Miss Jamieson,' Clegg chimed in from the little table, where he was pouring out tea. 'You should see our food bills! Tree, come and get some tea for Miss Jamieson, so that she can have it there, if she likes.'

I went and fetched some tea, but was almost afraid to offer her anything more substantial; however, I ventured to take a plate of cake, and was relieved to find that she was not offended. In fact, I thought she did very well on the whole, and she continued to admire, with her teacup comfortably secure on the window sill.

'I believe,' she said mournfully, 'that here one might forget the petty vexations of this life and rise to higher things.'

'I'm so sorry,' I said. 'I mean, if you've many of them.'

Miss Jamieson looked at me and sighed reproachfully.

'Mr. Tregenna, have you ever known what it is to feel alone?'

I was about to explain that I had been an orphan almost ever since I could remember, when we were startled by a shriek from Mrs. Reay-Carter.

'Bones!'

It was quite true; there were the bones for all to see, as she pulled back the little curtain below Clegg's bookshelves.

• 'Tell me they're not our own; Mr. Clegg, tell me they're not our own—human, I mean!'

'Fraid they are, Mrs. Reay-Carter,' said Clegg, looking at her in despair. 'I'm awfully sorry I didn't lock them up. They're usually under my bed. But I was looking up fractures this morning. I never dreamt you'd——'

He stopped helplessly, and looked to me to back him up, while Mrs. Reay-Carter ejaculated 'Under his bed!!' in a tone of horror, and Miss Jamieson clasped her hands and murmured that she wondered what they had been through!

'Perhaps,' she whispered, 'some long-lost lover!' but I went to Mrs. Reay-Carter's rescue, though the contrast between the bones and her rounded figure was certainly dramatic.

'Let me take them into the next room, Mrs. Reay-Carter.'

I pushed back the curtain and took them out, and with them a skull, which the ladies had not seen, and which wrung a fresh shriek from Mrs. Reay-Carter, and another sigh from Miss Jamieson. As for Miss Verney, she had said nothing all through, but sat watching intently.

'May I look at the skull?' she asked, as I was moving away with it. 'It is quite clean, I suppose?'

'A little dusty, perhaps. Let me make sure,' and I flapped the edge of the bookshelf curtain over it before I gave it to her.

'Don't be long, please!' entreated Mrs. Reay-Carter. 'Some of it might get into our tea, you know, or somewhere, mightn't it?' while Miss Jamieson sighed from the window that It (meaning I suppose Death or Despair or Loneliness) was everywhere already.

Miss Verney said nothing more, but, taking the skull from me, put it on the edge of the little table at which she sat. Resting her chin on her left hand, she peered into its eyeless sockets, which stared blindly back at her. Sitting, thus, face-to-face with this grim reminder of what she would one day be, she made a very different picture from that presented by Mrs. Reay-Carter.

One saw more strikingly the thinness of the face, and under it one could more easily trace the different points which had their counterparts in the thing before her.

Her chin rested in the hollow of her left hand, the fingers of which lay against her cheek, and, standing there by her side, waiting to take the skull again, I noticed on her little finger a peculiar ring. It was of thick, heavy claw-setting, which held a beryl. It looked almost a man's signet ring in its massiveness, and I noticed that there was some crest, or other symbol, cut on the stone.

As I leant a little closer, however, Miss Verney tired of the skull and handed it back to me.

'Take it away, please. As Mrs. Reay-Carter says, it might get into our tea,' and I carried it into the next room, leaving it on the bed.

When I came back Miss Jamieson was looking from the window again, and speaking of what she was pleased to call the 'forcefulness' of the Forth. She had called Clegg to tell her the names of the hills within sight, and Miss Verney, obstinately avoiding conversation with Reid or Muir, beckoned me to sit beside her. I went, and began chatting, while, at the window, Miss Jamieson compared the Forth to other rivers; Mrs. Reay-Carter looked as if she thought it time to go, and began drawing on a glove, and Clegg, who had had no time to attend to himself, turned to the table for a cup of tea.

'I have a craze for curios, Miss Verney,' I said, 'and I see you have a quaint beryl ring there. Do you know the meanings of the different stones?'

'No,' she said indifferently. 'It's almost too old-fashioned to wear, but I picked it up abroad, and I like it.'

'The beryl was a favourite stone with the old magicians, I believe. May I look at it?'

She was going to slip the ring off, but changed her mind, whether from coquettishness or not I don't know. But she gave me a chance of looking closely at a very beautiful hand, and I confess that, curious as I was about the ring, I looked at the hand first, and in consequence missed the ring altogether. For, while we talked, Miss Jamieson had wandered over the rivers of Scotland and was now on the Tweed.

'Brimful of memories,' she announced, 'and now, alas, with another sad one for me!'

'For me also,' I thought, as I bent over the hand, and Clegg politely asked her to explain.

'Poor Mr. Henderson, Mr. Clegg. You know all about it, of course.'



'What do you mean?' asked Clegg, while I looked up, still holding Miss Verney's fingers.

'Drowned, you know, last week. Suicide, you know. They say, of course, that he was mad ; but who can tell?'

Clegg stood with the untasted cup of tea half raised to his mouth.

'Not John Henderson ! For God's sake, not John Henderson !'

'Ah yes. I thought you knew already. I knew you had rowed together.'

Clegg's cup fell clattering unnoticed to the floor, while his eyes wandered from one face to another, and a little cry came from Miss Verney. I was still holding her fingers, and had gripped them so tightly that the beryl was cutting into the flesh.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE LISTS ARE OUT

I DROPPED Miss Verney's hand with a hurried word of apology and turned to Clegg, who I thought was going to fall. Mrs. Reay-Carter promptly passed me her vinaigrette, but Clegg put it aside.

'I'm all right,' he said slowly ; 'but you startled me.'

He moved a step, but stopped again, swaying to and fro.

'Better lie down, perhaps,' he muttered, 'if I may go to my room. Give me a hand, Tree, will you?'

He tried to laugh it off as I took hold of him, and to ask their pardon, but the words died away in incoherent muttering, and when I got him on to his bed he lay there staring blankly at the wall. His teeth were chattering as I threw an ulster over him and went back into his sitting-room, closing the door behind me, anxious to get them all off as quickly as I decently could.

The three ladies were talking over the thing together. It seemed that they all three had known poor Henderson, but they knew none of his people, and neither Mrs. Reay-Carter nor Miss Verney had heard of his death before. They moved to go, after asking for Clegg, and I made no attempt to keep them. I was anxious to be with him again, and went down to

the door with them, when the three ladies and Muir left together, and Reid turned gloomily away to his room. I heard his devilish violin begin as I came back up the stair, but it stopped before I could get to him. He had evidently thought of Clegg, to whom I returned.

Clegg was still lying as before, shivering under the ulster, and staring blankly straight before him.

I went to the side of the little bed and spoke.

'You're better between the blankets, old man. Strip, and get to bed.'

He seemed held by some fixed thought, and scarcely showed that he knew I was there.

'Come!' I touched him on the shoulder. 'You must shake this off, Clegg. It's making a baby of you.'

He turned a grey haggard face to me.

'Shake *what* off? Can you tell me that?'

'No; I don't know. But you must know yourself.'

He looked at me with sombre eyes, and shook his head.

'I know nothing.'

'Nonsense, you must know why you're frightened. Why, man, you're not the fellow I took you to be at all! You're scared out of your wits. One can't say anything or do anything but what you start shivering.'

'Listen,' he said. 'Have you ever been dogged by a shadow or a dream? Have you ever had a ghost walk by you in the sun, Tregenna, and talk to you in a crowd? Have you ever watched for your friends to die, and not lifted a finger to save them, or uttered a prayer, except that you might die too, and have done with it?'

He raised himself on the bed to watch me more closely.

'It is not your turn yet, but that may come, and then you'll pray for death, as I do when the fit is on me, ay, and perhaps grip it for yourself, as Henderson did.'

I felt my flesh creep on that sunny afternoon as he said these things.

'Will you tell me what all this means?' I broke in almost savagely. 'Here you lie shivering on your bed, and talking drivel of which a dipsomaniac would be ashamed. What have you to do with this man Henderson's suicide?'

'Nothing, thank God! That I'll swear, Tregenna, but I might have known.'

'Known what?'

He lay there, eyeing me sullenly.

'Nothing,' he said. 'I was lying. What should I know? I'm not to be trusted as I am now, am I? You wouldn't take my word for anything, just now, would you?'

I certainly wouldn't, but I didn't care to tell him so.

'I don't think I want you to tell me anything just now,' I said, 'because you're so excited. But you must let me know more about this later, or I'll call in a qualified man.'

'I can't. I don't believe I could if I tried, and I can't try.' Besides, I shall think it all rot to-morrow, I know.'

'Of course you will,' I said, 'but we'll talk it over together all the same. What has upset you like this?'

He shook his head again.

'I got a fright, I think, and it sticks to me. I'm as much ashamed of myself as you are, but I can't help it.'

I had coaxed him into bed while we talked, and he looked better.

'Can you sleep now? You'd feel different if you had two or three hours quiet. You can do without dinner for once.'

The gong sounded as I spoke, but he said he would rather lie there, and was willing to be alone, so I left him and went down to the dining-hall.

There the men came trooping and stamping in, some from their rooms, some from Princes Street, some from the country, but all ferociously hungry.

As for me, I sat and puzzled over Clegg, without much appetite, and got well chaffed by the rest, who thought I was nervous about the examination results.

'Do you know the Lists will be out to-night, Tree?'

'No,' I said. 'I thought they wouldn't be put up till to-morrow.'

'They will, though,' chimed in another man. 'Don't you see Evans isn't here? He's in such a blue funk that he's waiting at the gates. They'll be up at seven.'

'Tree'll see stars to-night.' (Stars against the names stood for honours.)

'Three stars, maybe!'

'He'll paint the town red.'

'I bet you he won't miss a bar in Princes Street.'

'Extra bobbies on these nights, Tree. Be careful!'

'What is he going to stand?'

'Where shall we meet him?'

'Tell us what you're going to do, Tree.'

'I can tell you what he's going to do first. Send off wires to all the girls whose photos are on his mantelpiece.'

'Rot! They don't know him, and don't want to. They're copies of "Ladies of our Aristocracy," from the *Strand Magazine*.'

'Oh, Tree, you bold, bad man!'

'He ought to send them all his photo in the M.B. hood. That'd fetch 'em.'

Dinner was at an end, and I rose from the table.

'Going to the 'Varsity, Tree?'

'Yes, I suppose so. It's after seven.'

'Good man! We'll come too,' and to my disgust half a dozen men rose.

'Look here, you fellows. If my name isn't up, you won't know what to say—no more shall I.'

'No fear, old man. You'll be all right.'

I shrugged my shoulders. 'As you like! I want to go upstairs a minute first.'

I ran up and looked into Clegg's bedroom. He had fallen asleep and lay quietly there, so I went out on tip-toe, feeling very sick about him.

The other men were waiting at the foot of the stair, and we went off in a body.

We had scarcely got into the street before one felt that there was something afoot. The shops were closed, there were few cabs or carriages about, but students, easily distinguished somehow, even if one didn't know their faces, were plentiful, and all moving the same way through the twilight.

Presently, while we had still some distance to go, a cheer rose through the still, evening air. The Lists had come out, and we broke into a run. Then two or three men came flying past us at top speed from the University, cheering as they went. As we turned the last corner I almost tumbled over one, who was leaning against the wall. I shouted 'Pardon,' and started again, when I caught sight of his pale, pinched face.

'Hurt?' I asked, but he shook his head.

'No—go on.'

I did not know him, but one of our men who had turned when he saw that I had stopped, came up and looked at him.

'Why, it's Taylor ! Through, I hope ?'

The man shook his head despairingly.

'Spun all round,' and went slowly off.

We stood and watched him as he turned the corner.

'Poor beggar !' I said. 'I wonder if I'll be the same in a minute.'

I went on more soberly, but another man running by caught sight of my face and came back.

'Tregenna, I think ?'

'Yes.'

'Congratulations—you're through !'

He wrung my hand, and started off again. As for me, I found that I was cheering, and dashed off again to see my name with my own eyes.

Another moment and I was in the pushing, swaying crowd about the Lists, where they hung in their glass case on the wall of the gateway. Men fought in and men fought out again, cheering and flushed, or silent and pale, with grim faces and set teeth. Even when I reached the things I couldn't see them, for a big fellow stood in front of me, looking up and down the names, and refusing to budge.

'I can't see it yet, but it must be there, I tell you ; I say it must be there. I didn't do so badly as all that.'

He kept repeating that his name must be there (names of those who have failed are not posted), until the crowd got mad.

'Where are your glasses ?'

'What's your name ?'

'Shove him out !'

'Hold up your elbow and tell me your name,' I told him.

'I can see under your arm.'

'Yates.'

There was not a 'Y' on the list. I could see that at once, and I had to tell him so, after running carefully down the row and feeling a little shiver of delight as I saw my own name.

That man and I worked our way out together, and he stood quiet for a time on the edge of the crowd, while I looked for the fellows who had come with me.

Then he suddenly dashed into the thick of it again. I saw him, a head above most of them, fight his way roughly right up to the wall, and hold there while others hustled about him, until he had gone over every name once more. After which

he heaved them off, and, coming through as a swimmer might come through the breakers, disappeared in the dusk.

Men were still dashing up and flying off again, or hanging about the gateway, to tell one another who else was or was not through, when I found the other Settlement men. They had got hold of Evans, who was so surprised to find his name also on the Lists that his sandy hair stood on end ; and he and I spent the next five minutes in shaking hands with one another and with those around us. Then we started back in triumphal procession. I trust no one was annoyed or hurt. I know we took the middle of the road, and kept it, in spite of occasional cabs and carts. There were a dozen parties like ourselves shouting along through the hot summer night, and very soon all Edinburgh knew that the Lists were out, and that some men, at least, were through.

Edinburgh had cause to remember it for some hours, since, in various ways until dawn, and in many parts of the city, men were showing their appreciation of the fact that one only passes his Final once in a lifetime. Also many of those who had failed found the occasion one which needed special treatment, and with some people success and failure have the same kind of celebration.

As for us, we went back to the Rookery, and I proceeded to hospitality. But first I ran to Clegg's room, and found him up and ready to tell me how glad he was. He insisted that there was nothing the matter, and that he wanted to drink my health more than anything else in the world. So that trouble slipped aside again for the time, and I went round the house getting lamps to illuminate my windows, also divers coloured chalks. Having them, I, with many flourishes, covered my door with inscriptions to the effect that Dr. Tregenna was at home that evening. Also that there were drinks and tobacco. That music would be provided. That a good time was intended, and that All were welcome.

So the men flocked in, and shook hands with Evans and me, and filled their pipes or rolled cigarettes, and puffed away over their whisky-and-soda ; while Clegg sang to them, and Reid played, and we only laughed when he tried to remember his ghostly violin solo, and failed altogether.

Then the room got too hot, and we opened every window not open already, and the door too, and leaning out were seen afar off by other men, who shouted up congratulations, and

came up afterwards to drink our healths, and stayed till dawn rose pale over the Forth, and another day began.

We laughed and we sang, we smoked and we drank to our noble selves. The dust-carts were rumbling through the streets before our party broke up with 'Auld Lang Syne,' and Clegg and I decided, as we said good-night in the broad daylight, that on Monday we would go West together.

## CHAPTER XVI

### DOCTOR TREGENNA

I DON'T know what other men may feel at such times, but during examinations I always avoided my best friends. Hence there was a certain house in Heriot Row, where I was to be found at least once a week in ordinary seasons, but which I had not set foot in for more than a fortnight.

Had I been alone after seeing the Lists, I should have gone there straight from the University, and as it was I breakfasted at eight, in spite of our lively evening, and ran down there directly after.

The news had evidently reached the house before me. The maid who let me in beamed her congratulations, though she didn't like to say anything, but the way in which she flung open the dining-room door and announced 'Dr. Tregenna!' was quite enough to make me feel that she deserved a little present at the first convenient moment.

Her words were taken up by everybody at the breakfast-table. The youngsters shrieked them as they tumbled off their chairs to jump at me, the master of the house repeated them as he shook hands, and my dear friend, Mrs. Tweedie, said them half a dozen times over before she could sit down again and go on with her breakfast. Even then she went out of her way to drag the title into every other sentence of her chat, while, as I sat drinking a cup of coffee, the children climbed one on to each knee, and a third on the back of my chair, and bawled 'Dr. Tregenna !!' into both ears until I had serious doubts as to the safety of my tympanic membrane.

They only left me when their father, rising from the table to go out, unfortunately called me plain 'Tregenna,' in telling me to come and dine with them that night. There was a

howl at his mistake and a rush made by his family, which gave him no time to hear my thanks, before being swept out of the room. We heard him vainly protesting that he meant to be master in his own house, while the children pushed him along the hall.

This gave Mrs. Tweedie time to shake hands and congratulate me once more, before the tyrants came back. When they did, they were told to 'say good-bye to Dr. Tregenna and go upstairs'—after which there was a great peace.

'Have you finished your coffee, Dr. Tregenna? Then come and make yourself comfortable on the sofa, and tell me all you're going to do.'

'Really, Mrs. Tweedie, I don't know. I haven't dared to make any plans. It seemed tempting Providence to arrange anything on the chance of getting through. But my friend Clegg hasn't been quite well, and we're talking of going off together for some fishing on Monday, then we shan't be back until the capping.'

'Monday! Oh, nonsense. Now, look here, Mr.— Oh, I beg your pardon, I really do—Doctor Tregenna, but it *will* slip out now and then just at first. You mustn't go off on Monday. I was going to have the last of my evenings next Friday, but we'll make it Monday instead. The friends we have at these times don't mind short notice a bit, you know. They're far too sensible. Now help me to send out some cards at once. I can't let you miss my last evening.'

'But you mustn't alter things for me! People will have made other engagements, and they'll be wild because they can't come here too.'

'Oh, nonsense. Of course they'll come here after they've finished everything else. We shan't be in town to see you capped, and who knows where you'll go after that? Don't say anything more, unless you really must get away on Monday, but direct envelopes for me.'

Of course I said that a day one way or the other made no difference to our plans, and that I should be very glad to stay, for I knew from experience that Mrs. Tweedie's evenings were great fun.

'You'll let me bring Clegg?' I said.

'Of course. He's a nice boy and I meant to ask him. Now, who else shall I ask? We'll leave the dull ones for something more orthodox and formal.'



So we went over Mrs. Tweedie's visiting list, and I'm willing to swear that, whatever else the guests might be, they would not be dull. As a matter of fact, one could not be that in Heriot Row. One always felt at home there without any effort. You knew you were welcome before the welcome was spoken, and genius and oddity rubbed shoulders there with equal jolliness. I spent some minutes at one of Mrs. Tweedie's evenings wondering whether I was a lunatic or something extraordinarily bright, for, among the men, at any rate, the regular comers had always something uncanny about them.

I regret that after careful consideration, in which I asked my hostess to help, I was forced to the conclusion that some mild form of lunacy was probably my strong point, and I have, alas ! never seen any reason to change my opinion. What does it matter, though ? Anything is better than being no fun to anybody !

We worked away at the list, and down the names went, one after another, artists, advocates, musicians, medicals, ethnologists and Egyptologists, science and second-sight, sculpture and scripture, higgledy-piggledy, pell-mell, until we had enough, knowing, as we did, that some would be sure to bring friends. By that time it was near mid-day, and I informed Mrs. Tweedie that I meant to celebrate the occasion by 'doing Princes Street,' which, as everyone knows, is the correct thing for idle folk on fine Saturdays. So off I went, after promising to come back for dinner that night.

O grey-walled, warm-hearted Auld Reekie ! I may laugh at your weaknesses, as I laugh at those of my own which I happen to know ; but when I forget the kindness with which I have been treated in that and other houses of your windy ways, may I never receive kindness more !

Behold me, then, on my way to Princes Street.

The day was bright, with scarcely a sign of a breeze. The shops had their awnings up, the girls wore their biggest hats and lightest dresses. Tourists, tanned and tired, carelessly dressed and dusty, wandered along in ones, twos, threes and half dozens. They hailed the *chairs-à-bancs* and cabs, and drove industriously to Rosslyn, the Forth Bridge, Holyrood, and Arthur's Seat—anywhere and everywhere. They stared at the shop windows, especially arranged to entrap them, and going in, bought brooches and photographs, tam-o'-shanters and tartans—regardless of clans and colours—while, marching through

their ranks, went idle representatives of studentdom (cutting the Infirmary), with the lordly airs of youth ; tan-booted and gloved, bearing marvellous canes and gorgeous ties, while their trousers were turned so high above their ankles, in spite of a long drought and bone-dry streets, that one wondered always why they could not take to knickerbockers at once, and have done with it. Some *had* taken to knickerbockers, of stupendous pattern ; others, here and there, went in covert-coats, breeches, and box-cloth gaiters, quite regardless of the fact that they never intended to sit a horse either that day or any other, and probably looked upon that animal solely as something to bet about.

Here I got a nod, there a hand-shake, sometimes a bow from some dainty dame, but I stopped long with no one, until I suddenly found that, following close upon a family of tourists, who prevented me from seeing far ahead, I had come quite near to Clegg and Miss Verney walking together.

They were both looking angry, and Miss Verney was speaking.

‘Whatever I may be,’ she began, but saw me and stopped.

I raised my hat and would have passed on, but she would not let me, and held out her hand.

‘Congratulations, Dr. Tregenna ! You’ve just come in time to prevent me from saying something to Mr. Clegg which he might not have liked.’

‘Perhaps it is better said and done with, whatever it may be,’ I suggested, and moved to leave them, but she would not let me go.

‘No, you shall be our umpire.’

‘A thankless task !’

‘Not at all ! We shall both be glad of having someone else to dispute with.’

‘That’s your idea of an umpire, is it ?’

‘Of course ! Now, tell me what you think of a gentleman who says he won’t take my word for a thing.’

‘He’s a rash man.’

‘Is that all ? I am inclined to use a stronger word.’

‘I never said I wouldn’t,’ said Clegg, frowning.

‘You looked it,’ which was worse. If you had only said it, I might not have believed you.’

‘If you will tell me the point,’ I said ; but they both declared that, after all, it was nothing, and the matter dropped ;

but Clegg sulked for some minutes, and when he came round to a more conversational and friendly state of mind, he did so, as it were, against his will.

Miss Verney talked on, apparently careless whether he spoke or not.

'I've made Mr. Clegg angry, Dr. Tregenna, by telling him he has not enough nerve to be a doctor. What do you think?'

'I think he generally has more than most people.'

She lifted her eyebrows at me, but said no more about it. Then she started on the subject of Reid and his music.

'Why didn't he bring up his violin yesterday?'

'I asked him to,' Clegg said, 'but he wouldn't.'

'How very unkind of him! But I'm going to meet him out on Monday night. He's sure to have it then.'

'If he's in the mood he can make your flesh creep,' I said.

'How charming! Fancy being able to take a whole drawing-room full of ordinary, commonplace people and make their flesh creep! Why, I'd give anything to be able to do that! How would you like me to make your flesh creep, Mr. Clegg? There's someone I want to speak to. Good-bye!' and, turning with a nod and a smile, she followed a lady who had just passed us.

Clegg looked after her gloomily.

'I can't make out women. I give it up! Would you believe she once spent an evening trying to make me promise to lead a better life?'

'You must be dreaming! What did she want you to change?'

'I suppose I'm not so good as I might be,' he said meditatively. 'I told her I didn't think I did any harm, and she rounded on me at once, and wanted to know what good I had done! It was a twister! I don't suppose I'm much use to anyone.'

'You're of use to me, anyway,' I said. 'You've promised to make an eel spear and show me how to use it for flounders next week.'

'Ah yes! I shall be glad to get out of this beastly place; I shall feel in a better temper then. I've lost grip of myself the last week or two somehow, haven't I?'

'It's because you're not up to the mark,' I told him. 'We'll

talk over things once we're away, and see if we can't straighten you up.'

'Pr'aps we will. I can't think here. Lost, what do you call it? Perspective, I think. I can't size things a bit.'

'I'm sorry we're practically nailed till Tuesday.'

I told him of the Heriot Row engagement, and he only shrugged his shoulders.

'All right, old man. That can't be helped. She's a jolly little soul too, Mrs. Tweedie is. We'll get off on Tuesday anyway, won't we?'

I promised that we would, and presently he brightened up again and became his old, cheery self, nodding here and bowing there, as we strolled along, for he knew far more people than I did. We stopped and spoke to some ladies, and I was glad to see how cheerily and well he took their scolding for not having gone up for his examination when I did.

He vowed that he had decided to give the thing another twelve months because they gave such a jolly dance last winter.

'I made up my mind I must have another before I left,' he said solemnly. 'You won't leave me out in the cold next winter, will you? I should feel vexed if I had lost twelve months for nothing.'

He spoke with such an anxious face that the girls were quite concerned, and the eldest, being of a serious turn, wanted to argue the point, while the other two begged each other to be sure that he should not be forgotten.

Finally, we went into the café—there is only one café in Edinburgh for some of us, but I won't tell you which it is, for fear of being slain by the proprietors of others—and there we lunched and met more friends. After lunch-time on Saturdays Princes Street is uninteresting, so we went back to our rooms, and, slipping into knickerbockers, took train to Colinton, and then tramped away over the hills, past Glencorse Reservoir and Logan Lee, past Habbie's Howe, and round again to Colinton.

The hill-sides were becoming faintly purple with the heather bloom, the grouse were calling everywhere, and the cobwebs of the town life were swept from our brains. We got back only just in time for me to dress and run down to Heriot Row.

There I spent the evening, and enjoyed myself hugely. Mr. Tweedie talked so much, and made so many vile puns, that I scarcely noticed how silent my hostess was. But she

sat in meditation until dessert, and then, rising to the occasion, delivered the speech which had been weighing on her mind all the evening, proposing my health and prosperity, while the children cheered, and her husband beamed at us all, and I sat wondering what on earth I had done to have such pretty things said about me.

Then they called on me to return thanks, which I tried to do and failed miserably, sitting down, however, amid frantic applause, after which Mrs. Tweedie and the children trooped out of the room, while my host and I stayed for a cigarette together.

Many a good bit of advice have I had at that table in such times, and often I have wished since that I had broken my promise of silence to Clegg, and asked the opinion of an older and wiser man on some of the things which were then troubling me vaguely in odd moments. But we talked only of pleasant matters. We discussed my chance of sport on the west coast, he gave me a sea-trout fly as a pattern, which had done wonders in certain west coast sea-lochs, insisted on my borrowing a rook-rifle, which was warranted a marvel for straight shooting, and told the story of a wonderful white seal shot therewith.

## CHAPTER XVII

### AN UNWILLING PROPHET

ON Monday night Clegg and I dressed before dinner, so that we might be ready for Heriot Row directly after. As a special sign of favour we were asked to come as early as possible, and be 'useful,' which included a great deal of fun, and an early introduction to some young and otherwise captivating damsels, who were to be under our special protection because they were strangers.

Here, as usual, I fell into the background to make room for Clegg, whose spirits rose under any such little excitement, and whose good-natured fun made him irresistible.

So I put myself under the command of Mr. and Mrs. Tweedie, and renewed acquaintance with the cellar, while Clegg conquered the half shy, half laughing girls, by his mixture of the paternal and fraternal, and made innumerable

offers of sight-seeing at Infirmary, University, Settlement, and elsewhere, without the slightest regard for the fact that at seven something the next morning he was due at the Caledonian Station, to leave Edinburgh for nearly a month.

I did what I could to help, and then stood by, watching him with a sort of pride. He was so strong and frank, so bright and manly when the shadow was not upon him. When he noticed that I was idle he pulled me into the conversation, and tried to make the girls think me—what I really believe he sometimes thought—a sort of Admirable Crichton, but I could do nothing to support the delusion, and obviously they could not help me. A word or two in politeness, and then they turned again to give him their undivided attention, while he thrilled them with an account of the last Inter-’Varsity football match, in which, though he did not tell them so, he had taken a great share of the glory.

I don’t think the youngsters knew Footer from Rugger, punt from drop, just as I believe a great deal Othello talked of was Greek to Desdemona, though she

With a greedy ear  
Devoured up my discourse,

but they were thinking more of him than of his story, small blame to them.

As for me, I got back into the shadow again and watched, and watched, with most incongruous and dismal thoughts. Thus it has often been, and this it is that makes me dull company, and, with many people, an unwelcome guest. At dance or dinner I have seen the skeleton at the feast, and heard the passing-bell beneath the violins. And again, where others mourned I have thought how little anything mattered, and how short-lived grief often is. So I go through life, always with an eye for the obverse side of things, and am half-hearted, maybe, at all times.

But now it was time for the guests to come, and one by one they dropped in, all with such friendly faces, and many with such quaint phrases and turns of thought, as they shook hands with Mrs. Tweedie, that it was impossible to be dismal, and soon the big room was filled with a great buzz of laughter and chat. Roughly speaking, the rule is that, in this house, anyone who can do anything to amuse is bound to do it on request. Those who are interested gather round him, those who are not,

move elsewhere, where something else is sure to be going on more to their taste.

Here were marvellous card-tricks, with explanations that left us all as completely mystified as ever. Here a group of would-be connoisseurs, gravely discussing the probable dates of certain rare engravings. Here a party playing Nap, and there another group around our hostess, while she lovingly displayed certain gruesome Egyptian relics, and all the time our host was here, there and everywhere, joking with everyone and with a hand in everything.

Presently there was a hush, and a whisper that Dr. David was going to sing. Who, that has ever been at Heriot Row, does not know Dr. David?

From South Wales  
He hails,

as an enthusiastic Welshman once wrote and printed in a Welsh weekly paper. Thin, black-haired, black-eyed, weird and omniscient, equally ready to tell you something you did not know before on physics or psychology, music, mysticism or metallurgy, he is a walking, talking, singing, highly sensitive encyclopædia, known for half a dozen different qualities in half a dozen different places, and with more letters after his name than would go on a lady's visiting card.

So he sang us a woeful ballad of 'Peggy, the Pride of Battersea,' and of the blood-curdling things which took place on a penny steamer, while we shrieked in unsympathetic derision, and then, breaking away into deep chords and strange harmonies, he sang the good old ballad of 'Sir Patrick Spens,'

The best sailor that ever sailed the sea.

There was no laughter then, and I, for one, though the sweet old ballad is one of the longest, would wish no line left out, from the beginning, when

The King sat in Dunfermline toun  
Drinking the bluid red wine,

through message and voyage, merrymaking and disaster, to the end, when

Half ower, half ower to Aberdour  
'Tis fifty fathoms deep,  
And there lies guid Sir Patrick Spens  
Wi' the Scots Lords at his feet;

and the grey sea rolling above them and washing through their bones. But this left us too melancholy for anything, so Mr. Tweedie came next, with funny versions of other ancient ballads; after which I turned my attention to Mrs. Tweedie, who was discoursing learnedly on a suspicious-looking swathed lump, while certain curious ladies sniffed cautiously at its peculiar odour, and listened respectfully.

'When you think that this had lain through centuries in the silent tomb,' she explained, 'ever since, probably, the time of the First Ptolemy, what can we think of the desecrating hand which ruthlessly tore it from its dark resting-place, and brought it to the level of a common modern drawing-room?' Here she looked with a fine contempt upon her very pleasant surroundings, as if she personally would have much preferred the tomb of the Ptolemies for a dwelling-place.

'May I ask, *where* did you say it came from?' asked a timid-looking little lady, in a prim black dress, who had been brought by a friend.

'From the tomb of the First Ptolemy.'

'Oh yes, that would be a long time ago, wouldn't it? *What* did you say it was?'

'A mummy foot. Probably this foot has trodden——'

'Oh dear me! Thank you, yes——' the little lady had almost touched the burial cloths. She retreated, and later in the evening I found her eyeing the supper table with a look of suspicion, for which I believe the mummy was responsible.

I turned away laughing to another group, where something equally creepy was going on, to judge by some faces, while others were more amused than awed, and here I found the presiding genius was a man whose face was well known to me, but to whom I had never spoken.

Maxwell-Farquharson was a man of whom many strange stories were told. His physical characteristics were marked enough to prevent him from being overlooked anywhere, for, in spite of his being only of average height, he had a way of fixing you with his eye when speaking, even if he spoke only of the weather, which ensured that you attended to him, and to no one else, for the moment. Also a legal training, had given him a command of his voice by which he could be sure of being heard, without any great effort, in any corner of a crowded and noisy room when he chose. He boasted that he could sleep when he wished, and stay awake as long as he cared to.



His powers of work were believed to be enormous, his memory exceptional. I myself, when we became more intimate, as we did later, have known him look at a hundred and seventy lines of verse for the first time at seven o'clock dinner, and recite them from memory the same evening. Add to this that he dabbled in all sorts of old-world lore, knew Greek and Latin, French and German of course, also a little (or I believe more than a little) of Hebrew and Sanscrit, Hindoo and Arabic, and was intimately acquainted with the learning of the old alchemists and the magic of all nations, and you have a man who could, if he chose, amuse a drawing-room, or easily interest the inquisitive souls found there, and everywhere else at times. I had heard that, if he was stronger in any one out-of-the-way study more than in a dozen others, finger-prints must stand first, and that he was in correspondence thereon with Francis Galton at that time.

Later I found that Mrs. Tweedie turned to him for help in her beloved Egyptian lore, scholars went to him with knotty points in translation, medical men to discuss the possibilities and probabilities of old methods of treatment, while I, to confess a hobby not yet spoken of, strung rhymes with him and for him to our mutual amusement, if not edification. All this I found out later. Now I only knew him by sight. Just at present he was reading a girl's hand, and it was strange to contrast his earnest, strongly marked face, and its piercing, intent eyes, with her smooth cheeks and forehead, as with little screams and protestations she alternately prayed him to tell her more, and to stop altogether, according as he seemed verging on pleasant promises for the future, or unpleasant revelations of past girlish vagaries.

He finished at last, on the whole to her satisfaction, and sent her off with a little joke, but as she turned away his eyes followed her through the room in what I thought to be a sadder fashion. As I have said, I did not know him personally, but by impulse I spoke.

'You have not told her all,' I said softly, standing at his elbow.

'He turned at once.

'Ah! Do you deal in these tricks?'

'I know nothing of them,' I said, 'and I have no reason to believe anything, but my eyes are trained. You saw, or thought you saw, something not quite so pleasant as what you told.'

He shrugged his shoulders.

'It is safe to say "Yes." If she live long enough, trouble must come. If she die young, that will probably be thought a misfortune by many people. You see, I am safeguarded.'

'I see,' I said, 'but I don't know that safeguarding is needed. As I have told you, I know nothing of these matters for or against.'

• He looked at me more attentively.

'That is a pity! You would soon learn—if there were anything worth knowing. Do you care for me to repeat the orthodox ceremonies and make the usual stock-in-trade statements over your hand? I should like to see it.'

I laughed and held out my hand to him.

'I haven't the least objection. Only don't tell me what has happened, or what will happen. Tell me what I *am*, as far as you politely can. Tell me, if you can, my likes and dislikes.'

He looked at my hand.

'What are you?

'Doesn't my hand say?'

'Not at all; it very likely says something altogether different.'

'I'm a medical student, just going to graduate.'

'H'm! Well, if I met you, say at dinner, and saw your hand, I should expect to find you interested if I talked of Art.'

'Well, I should be, but I'm as ignorant of Art as of hand-reading.'

'Maybe! But what do you call Art? Don't you scribble, or do something outside your profession?'

'Yes, I have tried to write sometimes.'

'That surely shows a leaning toward one of the Arts. Did you think I must mean painting or sculpture?'

I nodded.

'Now tell me something not too rude about my character.'

'You're melancholy. You don't look for a bright side to things as a rule. You anticipate troubles that never come. But at the same time——'

'Mr. Maxwell-Farquharson, will you give us a recitation? We should like it so much!'

The speaker was Mrs. Tweedie, and Farquharson turned to her at once, and followed to the other end of the room.

'We will have a little chat later on, Dr. Tregenna. You won't be going yet awhile, will you?'

He said this over his shoulder as he went.

'No,' I said, 'I shall be very glad to talk,' and I stood quiet, to watch him while he amused the room with a story of a London adventure.

The room was full of strange and out-of-the-way people that night. From a chat with an ethnologist, who staked his reputation that I was a Phœnician and not a Celt, as I had believed myself to be, I drifted into an introduction to a lady artist, who, instead of talking Scotch Academy versus Scottish Artists, &c., persisted in discoursing astrology.

'I know nothing of it,' I said.

'So Mr. Maxwell-Farquharson led me to suppose.'

I stared my blank astonishment.

'Yes,' she answered, 'you interest him, and when he is interested he does not drop anything or anybody. Of course, if you told him you knew nothing of palmistry he could easily judge that astrology would be unknown to you too.'

'Quite true,' I laughed. 'I expect palmistry and chiromancy come first. Do you wish to interest me in astrology? I thought there was no such thing now.'

'No,' she said, 'I only do as I'm told. If you will let me cast your horoscope, I don't think it matters whether I interest you or not.'

'Surely you take a great deal of useless trouble for a stranger!'

She laughed back.

'Suppose that I only follow a fad! May I do it?'

Of course I promised, and said I would send her the very few facts that she wanted.

I took her address, half-laughingly, and noticed her no more, for, happening to turn toward Mrs. Tweedie I found that she was receiving a late group of guests—Mrs. Reay-Carter, Reid, and Miss Verney. I heard later, from Reid, that Mrs. Reay-Carter and Miss Verney meeting him at another house where he had been playing his violin, had brought him here with them. Whether it was Mrs. Carter or Miss Verney who had asked him, he could not tell me.

Later still, in fact long after, I found that of the three Mrs. Reay-Carter was the only one known to Mrs. Tweedie.

Almost directly after they came, and before I spoke to them, there was a move made toward the supper-room, and I took,

charge of a gushing damsel, who straightway proceeded to tell me how she envied me and all other medicals.

'Your studies are over ! Oh, how sorry you must be ! I don't often come to Edinburgh, you know, and when I am here I don't often go to the theatre, but whenever I go, there you are, up in the gallery (not you, I mean, at least I never saw you, but medical students, of course), shouting and singing your jolly student songs ! How I wish I were a medical student !'

I was about to try to answer her politely, without destroying her bright ideal, when I noticed that even here Maxwell-Farquharson was not left in peace. His supper was ended, and he stood as most of the other men did, near the lady he had brought down. This lady happened to be Miss Verney, and she, having, I suppose, heard of his upstairs performance, was begging him to look at her hand.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE HAND OF FATE

WHEN I saw what was going on between Maxwell-Farquharson and Miss Verney, I was very much more interested than I had been in his other experiment. I had cared less—very much less—for his none too complimentary verdict about myself. This was, probably, partly because I had no special reason to believe in him before he looked at my hand. But what he told me of myself was at least partly true ; and whether he drew his inferences from my hand, or from something else, mattered nothing to me so long as he seemed to get near the truth.

Just at present I had a vague belief that a play was being acted out around me, more complete, more likely to be fully developed, than the comic tragedies always on the stage before us, but seldom completely seen. Whether this particular play was comic or tragic I could not, for the life of me, tell ; but I meant to watch it. I thought that Miss Verney might be an interesting minor character in it, and here was a chance for knowing more of her, at any rate. My partner had gushed through some sandwiches, two sweets, and a couple of bananas, with a heartiness and enjoyment which did credit to her health of

body and mind. Finding that she would have nothing more, I pointed out to her what was going on close by, and she at once asked if we could go nearer, announcing vaguely that she loved all that sort of thing.

This made me burst out laughing, much to her disgust. It reminded me so suddenly of Mrs. Reay-Carter, to whom I had not yet spoken ; but I apologised with all humility, and drew her chair nearer to Maxwell-Farquharson and Miss Verney, since the argument they carried on was quite public.

It seems that Miss Verney had started by suggesting that he should read her hand, and that he had not been very ready to oblige her, telling her he was sure it had been done already, laughingly hinting that her fortune was in her face, not her hand, and also pleading laziness.

What was at first a joke for her, became deadly earnest directly there seemed any chance of her being thwarted, and she pressed the point hard, while he, still laughingly, objected, and proposed that, if she had finished supper, he should take her back to the drawing-room.

To this she suddenly said, 'Yes,' and rose to go up the stair.

'After all, such child's play is not a thing to quarrel about. I don't believe in it one bit, Mr. Farquharson ; and no more do you. Take me upstairs, and we'll say no more about it.'

So he took her away, and we followed, for I was not quite satisfied that Miss Verney would do nothing more in the matter ; but, directly we reached the drawing-room, Farquharson was seized by Mrs. Tweedie and taken away to be introduced to someone else, so that nothing further happened for the time.

Miss Verney was taken possession of by Professor Grosvenor, who had just come, and who had found her a corner in one of his schemes. This they discussed confidentially, and would, so far as Grosvenor was concerned, have included and remodelled the general plan of the universe before stopping, had not Mrs. Tweedie hushed them because Mrs. Reay-Carter was going to sing.

This she did in her best style, being fortunate in the colour of her background, and having the candles placed to advantage. It made a very pleasing picture, and she sang a not too well-known Scottish ballad with the most careful expression—of face.

'I am fond of that song,' I said at the end, turning to the lady next me. 'Aren't you?'

She smiled sympathetically. 'It is very beautiful.'

'I think the words are so much above the average; don't you?'

She smiled a little more doubtfully. 'Ye-es, they're very sweet.'

I was inclined to compliment her on her acute ear, for, though I knew the words, I couldn't distinguish them; but I held my tongue, feeling that there was no reason to suppose everyone as deaf as myself. Presently, however, the same little lady who had been frightened with the mummy's foot by Mrs. Tweedie, leant across me and spoke.

'Can you tell me, my dear, what song was just sung? I could not hear a word of it.'

My partner looked at me with apprehension, but I was studiously deaf, and fixed my eyes upon the gas-bracket opposite.

She leant across a little, and whispered hurriedly:

'Italian, I think!'

Meanwhile I studied the bracket with an interest which I have never felt before or since.

Then Reid played, much to everybody's delight, but did nothing extraordinary, although Miss Verney begged him, from the other side of the room, to make her flesh creep.

At this he had turned and looked at her, in a wondering sort of way, but he said nothing; nor did he say anything at the end, when she rated him for not having done better.

'Not a single shudder!' she stated pathetically. 'And Mrs. Reay-Carter can shudder so beautifully if she has time!'

This was said in an aside to me, when I happened to be standing by her.

'I thought you were great friends,' I said.

'Why, so we are! That's how I know. And I like her to have a chance of showing her accomplishments. Take me to that chair opposite, Dr. Tregenna; I want to chat again with that strange man Mr. Farquharson. Now, your Mr. Reid is a fraud, but I think Mr. Farquharson could make my flesh creep if he liked. Anyway, I'm going to try him.'

I took her across the room to the empty chair on Farquharson's right. He was chatting with a lady on his left—the lady artist who had spoken of my horoscope—and paid no

attention to us, though I believe he knew perfectly well that we were there, and I should not have been surprised if told that he had expected us.

They were speaking of telepathy when Miss Verney broke into the conversation in her usual careless way. Watching her, one might suppose that she considered all conversation made for her amusement, to be interrupted or encouraged whenever she pleased.

'I believe no more in telepathy than I do in chiromancy, Mr. Farquharson.'

He nodded slightly, as if to show that he heard, but went on with the sentence that she had interrupted. The lady who sat beside him, however, turned to her when he stopped speaking.

'You have studied them, and find them of no use?'

'I have not studied them. Why should I? All hands are practically alike, and most people's thoughts are not worth knowing.'

She must have been trying to lead Farquharson on. She must have known that her hands were exceptionally fine. Farquharson turned to her now, with a little movement of impatience.

'Will you hold out your hand, and, Mrs. Munro, will you hold out yours? Dr. Tregenna, put yours beside it, and here is mine. Now, Miss Verney, I don't ask you to notice the differences. Tell me, rather, if you see anything alike in them, except that they have each the same number of fingers.'

He bent over them as he spoke, and looked at hers closely. Then he looked up into her face again.

'Do you pretend to be a judge of character?' he asked.

She nodded. 'I can trust to my own judgment as well as I can to other people's.'

'Ah! what do you judge by? Do you know?'

'Yes, by many things. Face, voice, walk, and so on.'

Farquharson laughed satirically.

'You judge first by what everyone expects to be judged by, and what everyone therefore guards and masks most. Why, a girl of fifteen could blind you! And you, and all of us, do we not blind others every day?'

'What of the voice?' I asked.

'It will show position and training maybe, but don't go to it for character! For that, after all, I trust to finger prints most.'

The last sentence was spoken half to himself, then he went on more loudly.

'Directly a girl goes to school she is taught how unladylike it is to shout, however happy or angry she may be. She copies the people with whom she associates. Still, I grant you, the voice tells more than the face with most people. As for the walk, yes, it may go for something. It will show whether a man or woman is a fool, who believes that, not God, but the bootmaker, should fashion one's feet. It divides the hillsman from the cockney, the squire from the ploughboy; but when you suspect a man for his walk, what you take for guilt will most likely be corns!'

Mrs. Munro and I laughed at this anti-climax, while Miss Verney looked at him with some disgust, and a contempt which she took no pains to conceal. Farquharson saw it and laughed quite unconcernedly.

'Our faces are not such stiffened masks but what they still express a good deal, when we let them.'

This was all he said, and moved as if to go, but Miss Verney spoke again.

'Now it is my turn to ask questions. Do you pretend to be a judge of character?'

'No,' he answered carelessly. 'My professional training, and a great many other things, have made me a much better judge than either of you, but I don't call myself a judge of character. There are so many little things one doesn't allow for. Judging by a face I can only judge of probabilities.'

'Do you pretend to do more with a hand?'

'A little.'

He spoke carelessly, but was watching her with interest. My professional training, like his, had made me quicker sighted than I might otherwise have been.

'I don't believe it.'

She spoke defiantly and rudely, but Farquharson smiled on her serenely, as he might on a spoilt child.

'Sometimes, not always, when you are angry, I suppose you find it convenient not to show it in your face?'

She nodded, watching him too.

'Perhaps.'

'Do you take as much care, or any, not to show it in your hands?'

'What do you mean?'



'Will you turn your right hand over, for me to show you?'

She laid her hand, palm up, upon her knee, and he traced a well-marked line across it, with a pencil he picked up from the table.

'You have strong passions, Miss Verney, shown here, and a strong will there. Sometimes your will governs your passions, sometimes your passions govern your will. Then there is, if you will allow me to say so, the devil to pay. But that is not all, by a great deal. Pushing this childish study a little further, I must compliment you on having the most complex character from this childish point of view, that I have ever seen. In your own way, and according to your lights, you will go very far to serve your friends, without consulting their wishes in that, or in anything else.'

He was looking at the right hand all the time, and now, asking for the left, he compared them.

'Well?'

'That is all,' he said lightly, and then grew graver. 'I might tell you something more. It might be useful to you.'

We all three waited, interested, however little we might believe, but at that moment Mrs. Tweedie interrupted.

'Mr. Farquharson, here is a lady wanting to speak to you for a moment before she goes. She has met a brother of yours in India, she thinks.'

So he was dragged away again, promising to be back presently, and Miss Verney sat impatiently tapping on the floor, and asking what right people had to interrupt the talk just as it grew interesting, merely because they thought they had met a man's brother the other side of the world.

'Men don't often want to see their brothers,' she announced fretfully, 'much less their brothers' friends.'

As for remembering that she had interrupted another conversation to start this one, I'm sure that never occurred to her, and neither Mrs. Munro nor I reminded her of the fact, though each saw that the other thought of it.

It was late then, but it was much later before Miss Verney got hold of Farquharson again. He had to see this acquaintance of his brother to her cab, and then he was waylaid in the hall and dragged away to the dining-room, where the supper had been cleared and replaced by whisky and cigars. Here I found him, deep in a point of the Code Napoleon with a brother of the long robe. When I reminded him, on Miss Verney's behalf, of his promise, he was aghast.

‘My dear sir, I forgot all about it!’ then he hesitated. ‘I was wrong to say I would tell her anything. She annoyed me, and this is the result. It is Karma. Tell her, if you will oblige me, that I have nothing to say but what she knows already. Nothing worth her waiting to hear.’

I laughed.

‘Do you think, from what you saw of Miss Verney, that it would be of any use?’

He shook his head, looking at me with pursed-up lips.

‘Not a bit! You’re quite right. I’ll come. It is Karma.’

All this time Mr. Tweedie had been looking from one to the other of us, with a look of perplexity on his jolly face, but here he broke in.

‘I don’t know what Karma may be, Farquharson, but it isn’t going to separate a man from his whisky this time of night. The girls have been plaguing you all the evening with their devilries. If any of them want to bother you more, they must come in and let you face them comfortably. D’you hear, Tregenna?’

I looked at Farquharson, who nodded in silence, and I went off. Miss Verney was still in the drawing-room, talking to Mrs. Tweedie, but turned to me at once.

‘Where is Fraud Number Two?’

‘If you mean Mr. Farquharson,’ I said, with an attempt at diplomacy, ‘he’ll speak to you when you go into the dining-room to say good-bye to Mr. Tweedie.’

‘All among their cigars and pipes and whisky!’ she said impatiently, quite regardless, as usual, of her hostess, who stood beside her, and of everyone else. But she went away to put on her cloak, and came back presently, ready dressed to go after she had been to the dining-room.

## CHAPTER XIX

### OFFENDED DIGNITY

WE went down to the dining-room all together—Mrs. Tweedie, Miss Verney, the few other ladies who had not yet left, and myself.

When we reached the room, where, at such times of night, one often had the pleasantest hour of all, there was a general

movement on the part of the men to make room for the ladies, and welcome them to a hot political discussion then set a-going.

Some of them sat down, with a hesitating look at the clock, some signalled to the men of their party that they must be moving. As for Miss Verney, she walked straight to Farquharson, and, confronting him, boldly demanded that he should redeem his promise of telling her something.

'Mind you, I don't suppose for one moment that I shall believe you, but your promise made no such condition.'

Maxwell-Farquharson looked at her quietly for a moment, as he stood with his hand on the back of the chair from which he had risen.

'No, I don't suppose you will believe me either, unless I choose.'

'Unless you choose!'

He nodded his head.

'Yes. Well, all I wished to tell you was, that before the year is out you will be running more than ordinary risks. I see you have come through a good deal already. This, I think, threatens worse.'

She laughed incredulously.

'What is the risk?'

'I can't say. I don't even know whether you can help it, or whether you will be to blame. But you have been.'

Miss Verney drummed on the table with her gloved hand as she eyed him impatiently.

'And how am I to believe all this vague stuff?'

'What does it matter to me if you choose not to?'

'Then why did you try to frighten me? Tell me something I can test your knowledge by.'

'Why should I?'

'Why should you have spoken at all? If you tell me something I can prove, I may act even on what I can't prove.'

Farquharson bowed gravely.

'You are right. I will tell you something. Let me see you to your cab.'

She turned to me.

'Dr. Tregenna will do that. Come to the door if you like.'

She said good-bye to those she knew (they were not many) and led the way out. When we got into the hall I went first to the door, and stood there with my hand on the latch, so that they might keep as far from me as they chose.

Just outside the dining-room door, which he closed, Farquharson stopped, whereupon she stopped too, and they stood facing one another. Then he leant forward gravely and said a few words, which I could not have heard even had I tried.

I thought the woman would have struck him. She shrank from him as if he were a snake, drawing her cloak closely about her, and glaring at him with her great grey eyes full of disgust.

'You lie!' I heard her say, and then she swept away from him without looking his way again.

As she passed me she was panting with rage, and I thought I had never seen her look so handsome.

Seated in the cab she leant forward, and gripped my hand where it lay on the edge of the window.

'Oh, to be a man for one minute!' she hissed. 'You coward, to let a woman be insulted while you stand by and do nothing.'

'I never heard a word—not one word. Tell me what he said, and if he insulted you, I swear I will bring him to apologise.'

'Tell you!' She shrank back into the shadow at once. 'Can't you see when a woman is joking, Dr. Tregenna? Good night.'

'But you called me a coward,' I said. 'Is that a joke too?'

'Of course. Good night.'

She called to the cabman to drive home, and he moved away at once, almost throwing me off my balance as I leant at the window.

I turned and went into the house. Maxwell-Farquharson was still standing there alone under the lamp, with his eyes fixed blankly on the floor at his feet.

'What did you say to Miss Verney?' I asked him hotly.

He looked at me and raised his eyebrows.

'Our conversation was private.'

'She complains that you insulted her.'

He eyed me grimly.

'Are you commissioned to protect her?'

'Her or any woman who is insulted where I am.'

He took a turn up and down the hall, and then stopped before me again.

'Quite right, Dr. Tregenna. I will be answerable to you if Miss Verney chooses. But she didn't tell you what I said, did she?'

'No. I asked her to, and she refused.'

'I have no right to tell you then, have I? I think she would rather that you did nothing. But, if it will give you any satisfaction to know it, I spoke in good faith and because she insisted. Also, I must confess, that the result was not what I expected. The lady was obviously startled and very honestly angry. I will allow that I may have made a mistake, in which case I shall apologise as humbly as any man may.'

He smiled and held out his hand.

'Are you satisfied?'

'I don't suppose you can do more,' I answered grudgingly as I took it; 'but it seems to me that you were very careless.'

'So I must have been, and yet—'

He stopped with a comical air of perplexity, pressing his lips together and frowning as he ran his fingers through his hair.

Then he looked at me again.

'The spirit of prophecy seems of not much account to-night, does it?' he laughed hesitatingly, 'and yet I wanted to let you know that this year, unless I am an utter fraud, you too should look out for squalls.'

I frowned back and quoted:

'Tell me something I can test your knowledge by!'

'A fair hit!' he acknowledged. 'Let us get back to our whisky. I do no more soothsaying, at least to-night.'

We did not speak of this in the dining-room, and a few minutes later Clegg and I said good-bye, and came away together.

Of him I had seen very little since the early part of the evening, and even now I did not find it easy to get him away. His attentions had become somewhat concentrated on one of the youngsters we met at the beginning, and I thought her two friends were beginning to look a little as if they were left out in the cold.

This girl was lively, and little, and fair-haired. It took him some time to say good-bye, it looked as if he were fishing for an invitation from Mrs. Tweedie to call again the next day, when I reminded him, loudly enough for all the room to hear, that it was time for us to get away, if only for packing.

As we went up the hill I chaffed him on the change. A week ago he had been all for tall brunettes. Now a little blonde had it all her own way. But he took it seriously, and defended himself hotly, vowing that he had always preferred

fair girls. None of your volcanoes for him, he said, and asked me if I noticed what a pretty little foot she had.

'Pretty shoe, maybe,' I retorted ; ' I go no further. I grant you it is the fashionable shape.'

At which he grew really angry, and then broke off to apostrophise the moon, then in her first quarter and showing over the Castle.

'She's like a growing moon herself, isn't she, Tree? So pretty and sweet and innocent. Gad! you should see her blush! It's the prettiest colour!'

'I always thought the moon a particularly knowing old girl, I told him. 'I dare say she'll follow the moon in another way, and get round, after a while. Those fair, plump girls always get awfully fat about twenty-five.'

At this Clegg was disgusted. He called me a hoary cynic, asked me if I got my jeers at women from the music-halls, and was not pacified until I owned that I didn't mean what I said, and promised to write him something in the way of verse to use whenever and wherever he thought fit. When we reached our rooms dawn had begun, and we decided that there was no time to go to bed. So we hauled out our Gladstones and our creels, rods and waders, fly-books and landing-nets, and scarcely had our things properly together before it was time to get what breakfast we could and rush for the train.

And now for the next fortnight we lived healthy outdoor lives and grew strong, and sane, and happy. By six o'clock, or thereabouts, of a morning one could sleep no longer, and we would tumble into flannels and go down through the soft west-coast morning air for a swim in the long sea-loch. Sometimes we were even energetic enough to get to the nearest burn after that, and catch a trout or two, so that we might have them of the freshest, with coffee, and eggs, and bacon, fresh butter and sweet cream for our breakfast-table, which was set close by the window overlooking the loch, so that we could watch weather and water, and see what sea-fowl flew across and what fish rose.

After breakfast, and perhaps a pipe, we started with well-filled flask and many sandwiches for one hill-guarded loch or another, and fished all day, probably, wet or dry, rise or no rise, till our food was finished and our flasks were empty, and we could cast no more. Then we would tramp away home, tired and happy, through the shadows of the great hills, by wood and

water, startling the rabbits in our path as they fed, listening to the owls hooting among the trees and the hill-fox barking on the hill-side.

One night we lay out under the brow of the cliff, looking over the Sound of Jura and watching for otters. They never came ; but many other things did, and we watched the salmon leaping in the water, which was like a pond that night for stillness, and we saw the cormorants fishing, and an, eider-duck with that year's brood, and waited while everything grew grey and mysterious and eerie, till the sun came again ; but not the otters, who are so cunning and wary that they may have been watching us all night without our seeing anything of them. Now and then we sailed away round the loch, with its creeks and bays, where one startled flocks of wild duck, or set great herons flapping lazily away. Sometimes we went out to the open sea, and explored little bits of the coast. On the one day that was really too dismally wet for us to be tempted out, we sat and smoked, and read nearly all the books in the house, and then, in desperation, after a cup of tea, I set to clear off correspondence. In doing this I was reminded of my promise to give the facts necessary for my horoscope, and, after getting rid of business letters, wrote to the lady who had proposed it, and had the benefit of Clegg's frank criticism while I did so, for he insisted on having it read to him while he sprawled at the window.

'Dear Madam,—I have not forgotten what you asked me to find out for you, and, after a little correspondence with my old nurse, who still lives down in my own West Country, I can give you what I believe to be an authoritative statement.'

('“Authoritative statement” is good,' Clegg stopped me to say ; 'but why on earth one uses such long words whenever one begins to write I'm hanged if I know.'

'I don't know either,' I acknowledged ; 'but please let me go on.')

'I was born in the year 1860' ('Such a young thing, too,' from Clegg), 'on February the 28th, and my nurse says that I began to cry and the old clock in the hall began to strike eight (A.M.) at the same time. She says that this clock was always kept between three and five minutes fast by my father, who was a punctual man, for the sake of my mother, who was an unpunctual woman' ('You take after your mother,' from Clegg).

'Nurse says it was a mercy I wasn't born on the 29th, but why she takes that grateful view of the matter I can't say. She says that I was a very pretty baby' ('Yah !' from Clegg), 'and very well behaved. She also says that I took notice very early, and taught in the Sunday school when I was quite young' ('Prig !' from Clegg). 'Pardon those details, which I fear you may think irrelevant, but she lays great stress on them, and says she always told my people that I should be a man before my mother, which I trust has proved true. When I come back to town I shall, if I may, call upon you to know the result of your labours, or to have the pleasure of seeing you again, at any rate, if you have changed your mind and decided not to take any trouble over the thing' ('Born to be hanged,' from Clegg).

'On reading my letter over, I'm afraid that it seems flippant. Believe me, I am grateful to you for your interest, and hope you will remember in reading it that it is written on a wet day in the country, and among constant interruptions and the annoyance of a spoilt child in the room.'

'That's me,' from Clegg. After which he threw the sofa cushion at me, just as I was signing myself hers gratefully, and we had a fine free fight for the next ten minutes, which ended in our falling against the door and rolling downstairs, after which we decided that the cottage wasn't big enough to hold us, even in wet weather, and, putting on our waterproofs, tramped along the road for a couple of hours, to get fresh air and an appetite for dinner.

To that letter came a much more decent one in reply, at once telling me how pleased Mrs. Munro would be to see me when I came back, and how sorry she was that we were having bad weather.

I showed this to Clegg, who was smitten with remorse, and naturally abused me. 'You're a skunk, Tree, writing a silly, stupid letter, full of rot and cheek, to a good soul like that ! You ought to be kicked !'

'I believe I ought,' I said penitently. 'But,' I added, 'you aren't the man to do it, anyway.'

Whereat he tried gently and on the sly, and got caught by the heel and tipped over for his pains, which, as you may suppose, brought about another rough-and-tumble.

But the fortnight passed away very quickly, and I had to think about getting back. As for Clegg, he had no reason for



hurry, and decided to stay until the end of the month—another week—promising to come back in time to shout at my capping.

He was getting so 'fit' and jolly that I was very glad he meant to stay; and we had a special night's fishing the last night before I left, so that I might go back with a full creel to divide between Heriot Row and other houses.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE CAPPING

THE great MacEwan Hall was not yet open, and capping was done in the Synod Hall, where it had taken place for years. Here, in a side-room, I was robed. A more or less respectable-looking trencher was given me to carry or wear, as I liked, a fiftieth-hand black gown was put about me, and over my shoulders was hung the M.B.C.M. hood, which is of pink silk, of a shade varying according to age, bordered with white fur, whether ermine, mountain hare, rabbit, or rat, I know not.

The average man no more dreams of buying his cap and gown than he would of buying a coach and four in which to come. He hires them (the cap and gown, not the coach and four) from one of the makers, to whom these gowns must be a lasting and therefore pleasant source of annual income.

By the time we were all arranged the place was like a kaleidoscope. Several shades of pink and scarlet mixed with black and white, with the green of science, the blue of law, and the grey of divinity. Most men wore one hood, some two, some even three, according to their number of degrees. Young fellows, just old enough to be capped, jostled grey or bald veterans, grizzled and wrinkled by years in laboratory or consulting-room, foreign universities, or service on our Indian border. Then the doors were opened, and in rushed mothers and sisters, wives and sweethearts, excited and proud, each one believing that her particular goose was the swan of the day.

Then, after much crushing, and packing, and repacking, after jumping up every moment until one had seen one's friends, and then again every moment until one was seen by them, we all settled down and awaited the rulers of the University—our rulers no longer.

At last they came—young, middle-aged, and old, mou-stached, grey-bearded, and white-bearded, with the big mace carried before the Principal by the gorgeous Chapman, himself one of the most imposing figures there.

Then came a short prayer, and then, one by one, our seniors who were to have degrees conferred, *honoris causa*, were introduced with flowing phrases and duly honoured.

After them the mob.

Up we went, scarlet hoods unbordered, blue dittoes and green ; scarlet hoods bordered, blue dittoes and green, in what seemed an endless chain. We stepped up the dais, we heard our names called, with perhaps applause and perhaps not, we bowed before the Principal, we felt the great cap, which he held, slowly come down and touch our heads, and the next man was going through the same ceremony before we had passed down at the other side.

After I had gone through this performance and reached my seat again, I sat watching the Principal, and wondering how his arms would feel at the end, after capping a couple of hundred men. But that, too, finished in time, and then we settled down to hear the oration for the day.

For, be it known that our Alma Mater (as she is invariably called by those in authority, though some of us remember her but as a sort of Baby-farmer on a big scale), our Alma Mater will not let us leave her unwarned and unadvised. Hence, yearly, there is set aside from his fellows a professor (doubtless because of his being worthiest where all are worthy) who, with prayer and fasting determines what he may say to the fledglings for the good of their souls. And the result (whether of the prayer or of the fasting I know not) is usually extraordinary. For while, during his scholastic career, the student may have thought this professor to be of no particular merit, and to have no particular care for him (the student), he at this ceremony is assured of his mistake. The professor, with his colleagues, has watched each student's career with a more than maternal interest. He watches his preparations for flight into the cold, cruel outer world with anxiety which he no longer tries to hide. The loving care, hitherto perhaps only able to show itself by persistent 'spinning,' is foiled at last, and the young bird flutters unsteadily away into space, while its old protectors stand on the edge of the well-lined nest, which, alas ! they may not leave (for are there not the remaining youngsters to think of?), and

shriek their fond farewells in a way which is truly heart-rending. Why is it so often only just as we are leaving our best friends that they show their affection for us? If they broke through their assumed coldness and showed us sooner what they really are, might we not be persuaded to stay a little longer, or, if not to delay our flight, at least to take with us more pleasant memories and a kindlier feeling towards those ancient birds?

These and other like ideas floated through my brain as I listened to the carefully prepared periods, and my eyes wandered from dais to gallery, and from gallery to floor, as I tried to discover what was the general effect of these platitudes and aphorisms upon the public. The public was quite evidently impressed. It listened with respectful attention, and applauded, generally speaking, at the right moment. When the speaker, drawing upon his memory of a recent Swiss tour, spoke of the heights which rose before the youthful climber, of the white deceitful snow and the dazzling sunset, with crevasses, avalanches, glaciers and peaks cunningly interspersed, the enthusiasm was tremendous, among the public. The students and graduands grew more highly appreciative when he spoke of the need of refreshment by the way. They then swelled the applause ungrudgingly, and the oration closed with general approval.

There was a flutter of relief among the hats and bonnets, a rustle of skirts and a turning of the feminine mind toward the comfort of a cup of tea in Princes Street presently, while the new graduates' thoughts were fixed on the photographers, to whom many would fly, capped and gowned as they were. All stood again for the benediction, and then most of the men trooped up once more to shake their professors' hands, in the majority of cases for the first and last time. As for me, I have old-fashioned beliefs about hand-shaking, and other like antiquated customs, which mean nothing to most people nowadays, so, there being on the dais a man with whom I didn't want to perform that rite, I slipped away to the side, among the crowd that had performed it and were coming down again.

It was at this moment that one of our men who sat under the gallery leaned over, and touched me on the arm.

'Lucky man to have finished the grind. Clegg looks pretty sick at not being alongside of you.'

'Clegg? He isn't here.'

'Oh yes, he is, and looking jolly queer too. Look up in the gallery there.'

I looked up to the place the man nodded at, and there was Clegg. He had come back, and I could see at a glance that he had brought trouble with him.

## CHAPTER XXI

## TREASURE TROVE

I WAS fated not to see Clegg that morning. I pushed away to the robing-room, threw off my cap and gown, and fled along the corridor to reach the front and catch him there, but had I been in less of a hurry I should have reached him perhaps more quickly. The laughter that broke out around me did not attract my attention, and I had reached the fringe of the main crowd, before a panting and angry robemaker was able to get hold of me, and point out that I had rushed off with my hood still over my shoulders. I apologised and pushed forward to try again, but a hand was laid on my shoulder, and when I turned I found that it was not Clegg, but Professor Grosvenor who had caught me.

'Excuse me,' I said, 'I am looking for a man.'

'Well, my dear fellow, this is as good a place to look as any other. I wanted to have a chat——'

'Another time, if you please, Professor ; I must catch Clegg' at once.'

'Oh ! is it Clegg you want ? I saw him drive away in a cab while you were engaged with your tailor just now.'

'Was he alone ?'

'I really did not see. Now, I wanted to say——'

'Which way did he go, Professor ?'

'Toward the West End. I wish to speak to you about him presently. But let us talk of something else first. What do you suppose all these young graduates are going to do now, Tregenna ?'

'Have a drink, most of them I expect,' I said peevishly.

'You are flippant, my dear fellow. Remember you are a graduate. But I hope, nevertheless, that in a symbolic way you have hit the truth. After this course of dry and circumscribed

study, must not many of them be ready to drink deeply at broader streams of knowledge and experience?’

‘I can’t say,’ I replied, and moved again, but Grosvenor caught me by the arm.

‘You are not going to be photographed, or to feast a family at the café, are you? Come, I want your advice, as a friend. How can one best get at these young fellows and give them a chance?’

‘Of what?’

‘Of a position. Of a share in our work.’

‘I don’t think they would appreciate it highly,’ I said.

‘They probably have other plans.’

‘Well, think it over and let me know. By-the-bye, what psychological studies you young men are! Why didn’t you come up to shake hands with us after the capping?’

‘A fad of my own. I didn’t think it would be noticed.’

‘Very interesting. If only I had time to work at my own subject, the psychology of the student would be invaluable. And, by-the-bye, what has happened to your friend Mr. Clegg?’

‘Happened! What do you mean?’

I was rather startled to find that Clegg had attracted Grosvenor’s attention, but Grosvenor smiled on me blandly.

‘Mr. Clegg interests me psychologically. He came to my class and signed the roll as a medical student. Here, I said to myself, is a brilliant man, who knows what lies at the root of medicine. But is your friend brilliant? Not at all. In fact, to put it plainly, Mr. Clegg is a fool. I can see no place for him in any scheme. I tried to attract his interest, to get his sympathy, and met with no response. He is the ideal of the unsympathetic, non-intuitional, irresponsible male. I begin to despair of getting help from any *man*; I must look to the finer, more readily responding feminine nature for the sympathy which is essential. By-the-bye, I find a fine and charmingly complex nature in your beautiful friend Miss Verney. But as for your friend Clegg, although practically he is of no use to me—a mere healthy animal at his best—psychologically he continues interesting. He has ceased to be the healthy animal, and is more like the hunted beast.’

The Professor stopped in the quiet street which we had reached, and looked at me meditatively.

‘I never remember seeing Mr. Clegg’s expression on a man’s face but once before, and that was years ago, when I was a

student in Paris. I was sitting in a third-rate café one evening, smoking my last cigarette, when a man came in and sat down at the far end close by me. He got into a dark corner, and it wasn't easy to see his face, but when I offered him a light from my cigarette I took my opportunity. He had the same hunted, haunted look that your friend has. Ten minutes later the detectives came and arrested him for murdering his sweet-heart. I saw him guillotined, and a very curious sight it was.'

'Are you hinting that Clegg, who, as you say, is my friend, is a criminal?'

'My dear Tregenna, be cool; I hint at nothing. I merely remarked the similarity, so curious, since there can be no other point of resemblance. Though, by the way, I remember that in my study of the psychology of snakes I have been led to attach considerable importance to——' and, as I laughed in spite of myself—for it had become a sort of student tradition that Grosvenor was, as we vulgarly expressed it, 'mad on snakes'—he glided away into a sketch of the fresh scheme suggested to him while he sat and watched the capping.

O busy brain, so quiet now, what was there in you lacking for perfection? Why to the very end did you always attract and always disappoint? Could one have seen things as clearly as you saw them, would one have approved your methods and your diplomatic morality? Even now, mistrusting him as I always did, I could not but be moved by the breadth of view and bigness of conception—only to be jarred presently by some little word suggestive of fickleness and sharp practice. His aims were those of a genius, and to reach them I believe he would have crawled, like one of his snakes, through mud to all eternity. Had he been a soldier, he would have been a second Marlborough.

We walked through one street after another while he poured out his ideas for my sympathy. For it was a characteristic of the man that he longed for a sympathetic hearer, and often thought that he had one, when the listener was merely vaguely astonished, or attentively studying the man himself. Often he talked a kind of shorthand of shadowy outlines, suggestions, and dashes, and at these times I found that one left him impressed by one knew not what, and with faint recollections of great possibilities hinted at, but no more.

Women hung round him and protested that he was 'so suggestive'—of what, they could rarely say. Men were

attracted also ; there were always one or two at his feet, but as a rule they presently got up and went away, laughing or angry, leaving their places to be immediately filled by younger and more enthusiastic fellows. I have wondered since what difference a woman might have made in his life, if he had loved and married her. But he never married, and on the whole I think it was as well—for the woman, at any rate, who would have dropped out of his life in a few months, if she ceased to have faith in the man, or sympathy with his daily changing schemes. He seldom spoke much of women, but I noticed that two or three times that morning the name of Miss Verney cropped up, and at last I asked him if he had seen her lately.

‘Not lately,’ he said. ‘Not, in fact, this week, although I was hoping to do so.’

His frank admiration made the idea of anything like love seem absurd, and I thought I knew the secret.

‘She is a clever woman, I hear,’ I said.

‘Undoubtedly, and a most useful help in many ways. You notice that she is developing tremendously?’

‘I am not at all intimate with her,’ I said, ‘and I’ve not met her for three weeks.’

‘True, you’ve been away ; I forgot ; but I see great changes. I have awakened her interest in many things, and she begins to look at life seriously. Indeed,’ he laughed, ‘the pupil bids fair to become more zealous over some things than her master ever was. She has lectured me on want of earnest purpose lately. We were to have discussed the thing further, but she has made no appearance since.’

‘She seems almost as versatile a person as——’ yourself, I was going to add, but stopped in time, and then ended, rather lamely, ‘as one could find anywhere.’

He nodded his head gravely. ‘It is true. There is a want of ballast. She is too emotional to be depended on entirely, I fear, but she has wonderfully improved lately.’

By this time we had circled round and were at the West End again. The Professor bade me good-bye at his door, hospitably inviting me in, but I refused, and started for my rooms, hoping to find Clegg there.

Clegg had not come, and I sat turning over the letters which I had not opened before leaving in the morning. There were one or two small accounts, which I suppose tradesmen were afraid of losing altogether, now that I had finished my

University career and might leave at any time. These I resolved to go out and pay that afternoon, unless anything more important turned up to prevent me. Then I turned to my other letters. The first I opened was from Clegg, and must have come the night before. I recollected that I had not looked for letters after dinner.

It ran as follows :

'Dear Tree,—I am being tortured again, and cannot stand much more. I write because, from what the folk here say about my looking ill and so on, I know that you'll see it for yourself directly you see me. You mustn't talk about it to me or to anyone else. Give me one more chance, and if I can make nothing of it I'll tell you, and you shall do what you like. I can't argue it with you, and that's why I write. For one thing, I'm not fit to dispute about it. I should only make a fool of myself. For another thing, I can't and won't give you my reasons for what I do, so we couldn't argue. Let me have my bed in your room, old man, if I may, while this is on.'

I sat and thought this letter over. It was quite true that I had promised Clegg to say nothing, but was I justified from any point of view in keeping the promise? On the other hand, if I decided to talk about it, whom should I tell, and what had I to say? What was the nature of his trouble? I didn't really know. I had very good reason to suppose that he suffered from hallucinations again, but he had been so well during our holiday that I couldn't be sure, until he told me, that that was it. If he did suffer in this way, what should I do? Should I consult a brain specialist? I felt that to be examined by a man, with any such idea, would be likely to settle the matter at once for Clegg. He would go mad almost certainly.

Then, granting these hallucinations, what had caused them? I had as complete faith in Clegg as I had in any man, but I could not help remembering Grosvenor's story of the man in the Paris café. A great many of us have felt at some time or another that, except for the actual deed, we were guilty of undoubted crime, and that if left entirely to ourselves the crime would have been committed. Might it not be possible that at some time Clegg had been tempted beyond endurance, that the little thing which has sometimes seemed to stand alone between a man and deadly sin happened to be absent at that time, and that Clegg had done merely what many of us would have done



in his place? Should I want to push this matter further if I knew all, or should I not want to keep it quiet, as he did. But again, if these hallucinations continued, at any time, so brain specialists would say, there might come a change after which he would be no longer responsible for his actions, but the man who had known of his condition and had kept it secret would be morally the criminal.

I sat and worried over it in despair. It might have seemed so easy for a stranger to decide, but this was the concern of my most intimate friend.

I finally made up my mind to see Clegg as early as possible, and insist on facing the matter quietly with him for a few minutes. If he slept in my room again that night, we could be sure, after a certain time, of being able to avoid interruption. I sighed with relief at having at least settled the next step, and opened another letter.

This was from the Countess of Jura, whom, much as I liked her, I had quite forgotten during the last few days.

‘Dear Mr. Tregenna,—What about that call you were going to pay me two or three Wednesdays ago? Don’t you usually keep appointments with ladies, or is your practice already too large for you to pay afternoon calls? I got very angry, and told Jura that if you wouldn’t come I shouldn’t ask you again, and no more I will, but of course I can’t keep you out if you choose to come this afternoon at four and call upon him. And I suppose if I happen to be in I mustn’t vex Jura by refusing to see you.

‘He took me to see you capped this morning. You looked horribly grim and stiff, from where we sat in the side gallery, and when you went up to be capped I saw quite plainly that your hair is getting thin. There’s a little bare spot just at the back, and I rolled up my programme into a ball and tried to hit it, but it hit the man’s nose behind you, and I couldn’t help laughing. Then he looked up very angry, but when he saw me laughing he began to grin horribly, and *winked*. Jura saw him, do it, and he *was* wild, poor boy! However, he’s got over it, and we both clapped you hard.

‘What a dirty old cap they use for you!’ I wonder, would the University let me give them a clean one. I *must* ask Jura, because he says he knows a lot of those dear old gentlemen who sat up there and nodded at you all. We might

have a big dinner, you know, and I'd present them with the cap, and make them promise to give you—what do you call it—a chair? Jura has just come in and says I'm writing nonsense, so I suppose I had better stop.

'Yours faithfully,

'JANE, COUNTESS OF JURA.'

'Well,' I said to myself, 'I think it will do me good. I feel as if I had been attending my own funeral.'

So I went to call on her ladyship—no, I mean his lordship.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE COUNTESS OF JURA

It is a mercy that, whatever worries may be on one's mind, all of us can throw them off at times and for a breathing space. Heaven knows I was not indifferent to what was going on around me, but after I had moved along in the sun for a few minutes I put dismal thoughts out of my mind for the time, and my spirits rose. After all, I had been capped, and it was a very fine day, and I was going to see some charming people. No more professional fees to pay, unless I chose to take special classes; also I was now in a position to make an income, even if only a small one. I felt a disposition to extravagance, and suddenly recollected that there were such things as cabs. Why should I be walking in the heat, instead of lounging comfortably while four legs did the work for two? But they say that habit is second nature, and I had for many years been far more accustomed to walk than to ride. There was no hurry, and Princes Street is always amusing, so I strolled lazily Westward, watching the people and horses; for although the first of August finds Edinburgh emptying of its 'carriage-folk,' it is not yet emptied. Presently I found that I was being signalled to from the window of a brougham, which was drawn up by the kerb, and, going forward, I bowed to Mrs. Reay-Carter.

'Ah! Dr. Tregenna, how long since I have seen you? Can I drive you anywhere West? I wanted to chat for a moment.'

I hesitated.

'If you are going home, Mrs. Reay-Carter, I shall be very

glad to be taken so far. I couldn't think of letting you go out of your way for me.'

'Oh, if you are going to see any of these dear, poor people, do let me drive you! I am feeling so cross this afternoon that I want to be charitable to someone.'

'I may not doubt your word,' I said gravely, 'but from your face it would be impossible to believe you were cross.'

This was perfectly true, for her face expressed only a calm and classic indifference to all things. I have wondered whether the constant cultivation of an appearance of indifference does not finally help to produce indifference itself. Mrs. Reay-Carter's voice, however, was not attended to so carefully, and had a hard, peevish ring just now. I remembered Maxwell-Farquharson's comparisons, and wished I could see her hand.

She smiled on me, and said that home would do very well, so I told the coachman to drive slowly, and settled myself down in comfort. Really a brougham is a pleasant possession, if well horsed, and Princes Street shows fresh charms when seen from a carriage window. I looked out and wondered whether I should ever have a carriage of my own, and if it would be worth the trouble. Presently I found that Mrs. Reay-Carter was speaking, and had a grievance.

'She might have sent me a sixpenny telegram, even if she was in a hurry.'

'That is only reasonable,' I assented. 'Who has done this monstrous thing?'

'Dreaming, as usual, Dr. Tregenna! You're very rude. I've just told you that I was to meet Miss Verney by appointment, and she never came. When I go to her house her sour-faced old housekeeper says that she has gone away for a week or more, but goodness only knows where. She has no relatives nearer than India, I know, and very few friends. You weren't going there, were you?'

'No. I don't even know where Miss Verney lives.'

'Well, I thought you might know where she had gone. I was told she had ordered letters not to be forwarded.'

'I shook my head.

'I've only seen her twice, I think, since you introduced me—no, three times. The last was at Mrs. Tweedie's, where you brought her.'

'Ah, yes. What a charming evening that was! Such a lot

of dear, queer, intellectual, unconventional people. And Mrs. Tweedie! What a dear, delightful hostess! Rather *outrée*, you know, of course, but so simple. I do love simplicity, don't you? The class in which one usually moves is so artificial. I sigh for the country and the honest countryfolk.'

'You will get away presently, I suppose. Where are you going?'

'Oh, there are some delightful people whom we are going to meet at Oban for a fortnight. They tell me they know the Countess of Jura slightly. Then we go to some new Continental baths for September.'

'And where does the country come in?'

'Oh, the children are all going to the country at once. I would give anything to be going too, but I must be with my husband, you know.'

I was afterwards told by someone else that Reay-Carter had longed for the British Association's meeting, and had been over-ruled; but no doubt Mrs. Reay-Carter's statement was the correct one.

'By-the-bye,' she said presently, 'didn't the Countess do beautifully at the meeting for the poor cabmen? She is most sympathetic. I saw tears in her eyes once when I was making my poor, silly speech. How well you got on with her, too!'

'Yes,' I said, 'she was very affable. Of course, she had to be polite, since you introduced me to fill Mr. Reay-Carter's place.'

'You haven't seen her since, I suppose?'

'No,' I said. 'Like you, she is in a set that I very seldom meet.'

I thought that clumsily enough put, but the comparison seemed pleasing to Mrs. Reay-Carter.

'I haven't seen her since, either,' she said; 'but I dare say I shall soon, and I mean to behave to her just as if she were born a Peeress.'

'That's very good indeed of you,' I asserted; 'but don't you think you ought to make a difference?'

'Not at all. Why should I?'

'I really don't know,' I acknowledged; 'but still, it doesn't seem just, you know! It's no advantage to be born a Peeress if other people can have the same privileges.'

Mrs. Reay-Carter shook her head decisively.

'I can't help it. It may seem horribly advanced and

democratic and all that, you know, but I have a real respect for the Countess, and I must show it.'

'Well,' I said, 'it's very brave of you, and I hope people won't blame you for it.'

'Why, you wouldn't surely treat her differently from other people of her rank, would you?'

'I think I might,' I said, laughing to myself.

'Well, I think that's very unjust, Dr. Tregenna, and I don't see what there is to laugh at. You ought to be just as respectful to her as to a real lady—which of course she is now.'

'She most certainly is,' I agreed. 'I only meant that, of course, one couldn't be sure of another lady of her rank being so unassuming, you know.'

'Oh, I think she was quite dignified enough, Dr. Tregenna, I can assure you. But then, the poor thing must always feel that we know what she was, so it is not so safe for her to unbend as it is for us.'

This was almost too much for my gravity. The carriage was drawing up to Mrs. Reay-Carter's door, and I got out precipitately, and had a broad grin before turning to give her my hand.

'Now, Dr. Tregenna, are you sure that I shan't drive you to see your poor people? Who did you say you're going to see?'

'A cabman's daughter,' I said; 'but I don't know that she's poor enough to deserve your pity. Besides, a brougham at her door might make the neighbours talk, you see.' And I bowed and left.

I went chuckling along until I came to the address Lady Jura's letter had upon it, and the idea of my position enabling me to unbend with safety, struck me so forcibly just as the door opened, that I grinned recklessly and involuntarily into the footman's face. It says worlds for his training that he never showed any signs of unbending on his side. I was so shocked at myself that I grew confused for a moment, and asked for the Countess instead of Lord Jura. The man waited patiently while I stammered myself into a calmer frame of mind, and then asked my name. On my giving it, he said that her ladyship was expecting me in her boudoir, and I followed him up the stair. When I was shown into the room, I found that my two friends were not alone. They were sitting with rather a

crushed air before a third party, a stern-looking, thin, big-boned woman, of perhaps forty-five, who was laying down the law emphatically on some important social question.

'You understand what I mean, Jura?' she said as I came in, and Lord Jura answered, 'Yes, Aunt,' and jumped up to shake hands with me with an air of relief.

Lady Jura beamed on me too, and presented me to this uncompromising-looking visitor, who proved to be the Lady—I don't remember what now, since in my own mind I at once christened her 'the Tartar,' and saw that the acquaintance was not likely to go further.

Lord Jura asked his wife for a cup of tea for me, but she answered that it was cold, and said she would have some more up presently, so he started chatting to me in a shy but friendly way, while his aunt continued to lay down the law for the benefit of Lady Jura. Later I found that they were going to a shooting-box in the North for the grouse, and the Tartar was trying to make Lord Jura see that, as a married man, he couldn't have all the visitors that he had invited as a bachelor. The conversation for the next minute or two ran somewhat as follows :

*The Tartar* : 'Now, there are those people at Moirn. They are very respectable, no doubt, but they are nothing more. Their father made his money in marmalade. It doesn't matter that the young men are good shots. So, I dare say, are the keepers, but you don't ask them to dinner, and Jura mustn't let these people force themselves on you. Do you hear, Jura?'

*Lord Jura* : 'Yes, Aunt. We're very anxious to know what you think of doing now, Dr. Tregenna. Of course, after the way you saved my wife's foot, although you and I didn't see much of one another then, I feel that you're an old friend.'

*I* : 'Lady Jura always made too much of that, Lord Jura. At least, in talking of it afterwards to you. She was very plucky at the time, but it was only a sprain.'

*Lady Jura* (drawling) : 'Marmalade! Oh, how funny! I suppose they never even have it for breakfast now. Jura, don't believe anything Dr. Tregenna tells you.'

*The Tartar* : 'They'll call; but it's easy to arrange that the acquaintance ends there. Jura is so silly. You can't know everybody.'

*Lady Jura* (imitating her) : 'We can't know everybody.'

Certainly not. Are there any people there that one can know?’

*Lord Jura* (fidgeting) : ‘What nonsense ! There are the Islays and a dozen other families within a dozen miles, just as good, or better, than we are.’

*Lady Jura* (with an air of profound astonishment) : ‘You don’t say so ! Is Jura really right in saying that?’

*The Tartar* : ‘I’ll not say but what there are good families there, but you can’t trust Jura. A good shot among the men, or a pretty face——’

*Lord Jura* : ‘Really, Aunt !’

*Lady Jura* (*sotto voce*) : ‘Only let me catch him !’

The Tartar ignored my presence altogether, and I began to feel one too many, and yet I thought that the other two would be hurt if I left because of her. Presently Lady Jura came to my rescue.

‘You wanted to see my ferns,’ she said, smiling on the Tartar ; ‘may I show them to you before it gets too late ? I think you said you had several other things to do before going home.’

The Tartar remembered this, and rose to go, with a peck at Lady Jura’s cheek, two fingers to her nephew, and a little nod to me. ‘The ferns,’ she said, ‘must wait until another time.’

Lord Jura escorted her down the stair, and the Countess went with them as far as the boudoir door. As it closed behind them, she gravely sank to the floor in the profoundest of reverences, and then rising and staring haughtily at me, with her pretty chin well in the air :

‘We can’t know everybody,’ she said.

‘So I see,’ I replied. ‘I’m wondering whether I was really asked to tea, or whether I’ve called as the marmalade people will’

‘Oh, you poor fellow !’—the Countess rang the bell—‘I forgot all about it. You must confess that we were discussing things of more importance. But Jura will want a cup too. He’s so afraid what I shall say when his aunt is here, that he always lets his tea get cold.’

‘What is he afraid you’ll say?’ I asked.

‘Oh, at first I used to contradict her flatly, and laugh at the sort of thing she was saying just now, don’t you know ; but Jura begged me not to, though he didn’t want me to be a hypocrite, of course. Now, if I’m in a silly mood, I agree

with everything—pile it on tremendously to frighten him—and sometimes I go too far. Last time she was here I made him laugh so, that he stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth and rushed to the window. She thought he was choking, and banged him on the back. Heavy-handed, I should think, wouldn't you? He doesn't care a straw for himself, don't you know, but he's so anxious for me to get on with his people. Sometimes I'm very nice with them, and sometimes I'm afraid I shock them; but he's awfully good to me always. You can't think how patient he is.'

At that moment Lord Jura came back, and, looking round for an easy-chair, flung himself into it with his hands in his pockets, and gave a big sigh of relief.

'A cup of tea, please.'

'Poor fellow, you want it! Would you like a cigarette too? Your nerves are shaken, aren't they? Did his wife keep him on thorns before his dear aunt?'

Lord Jura looked at her beseechingly, but she merely shook her head at him.

'Don't you look at me like that, sir! It's no use. The cat is out of the bag, the family skeleton is dragged out of the ancestral cupboard, and Dr. Tregenna knows all. *All*, my lord, and he isn't a bit shocked, because skeletons are in his line, and he knew me long ago.'

'You'll frighten him, my dear girl.'

'Frighten a medical student? I couldn't do it, Jura, if I tried until Doomsday. Do look at him! What can he be frowning at? Oh, I called him a medical student, and he's been a doctor these six hours. Jura, he'll never forgive me. He'll put poison in my tea. I can never ask him here again.'

She looked at me with such tragic horror that we both burst out laughing.

Then they started asking all sorts of things about my plans, and always in such a kind way that I couldn't feel offended, although I think I was watching for a chance.



## CHAPTER XXIII

## HOWELL IS MYSTERIOUS

So we sat and chatted of my plans and prospects, and after a while I forgot to watch for condescension or signs of patronising, and talked away frankly. I even told them of my pet ambition, which was to get some post with just enough income to keep me clothed and fed, and with time to find out if I had anything in me worth training further, either in medicine or in literature.

'Travelling physician to some rich man,' Lord Jura suggested, and Lady Jura at once accused him of having a bad cough, and asked me to order him South.

'Just before the Twelfth !' he gasped. 'I'd see him hanged first !' and I shook my head and told him he was too horribly healthy to be of any use.

'Jura ! Dr. Tregenna is our medical man when we're in Edinburgh, remember that.'

'You've one here already,' I told her. 'Sir James Menzies has attended Lord Jura's family for generations.'

'He hasn't attended either of *us*—Jura has always been as strong as a horse ; stronger, I think, from the horse-doctor's bills I've seen—and I don't want him.'

'Nor any other doctor, I hope,' I said. 'I shall be sorry for talking so much, if it makes you think you must do anything in the matter. Besides, I don't want to be pushed by my friends.'

Lord Jura shook his head wisely.

'Most of us are the better for it sometimes. I know I've been jolly glad of a lift once or twice, though p'rhaps of another kind. What else are we good for ?'

Lady Jura beamed on him approvingly and patted his head.

'Nice boy !' she said. 'You're a credit to me sometimes. What can we do to help this horrid fellow who won't be helped ? I'm afraid even to offer him a cigarette.'

'You needn't be,' I told her. 'That's a favour I can return,' and since Lord Jura was smoking, I took one, for, asking us if we minded, he had begun puffing away before finishing his tea, to restore himself after the excitement of his aunt's visit.

'It's strange,' I said, as I lit my cigarette, 'how hard it is to kill old prejudices. Have you noticed that, Lord Jura? For some reason, or for no reason at all, people decide that a thing is not good taste. If there ever was a reason for this decision, it very often ceases to exist, and yet, among certain people, the thing always will be thought bad form. Now, there is cigarette-smoking, for example. A man may smoke as many as he likes, and though he may be thought wasteful or idle, or even to be hurting himself, there's no fear of his manners being questioned, if he only smokes where he won't offend other people. But a woman! It's still very often thought fast for her, you know. She may be expected to allow smoking in the same room where she is; she may be allowed to own that she doesn't mind men's cigarettes in her boudoir; but, generally speaking, people are not ready to admit what is only common-sense, that a woman has every bit as much right to smoke as a man has, if it pleases her. Now, this is sometimes a trouble to a medical man. Suppose, for a moment, that I had the honour of being Lady Jura's medical man, I should try to persuade her, if she did not dislike the smell of cigarettes, to try one sometimes, if she could get your leave, of course, just as you only smoke if she lets you. I should point out that sometimes a single mild cigarette would be distinctly useful for that nervous irritability which she must occasionally feel, and which, at times, with the number of engagements you must both have, she can scarcely help.'

Lord Jura looked concerned, and the Countess sighed.

'I feel very irritable just now!' she said.

'My dear girl, if Dr. Tregenna recommends it sometimes, and if you think you would like it, of course you've as much right to try a cigarette here as I have!'

• The Countess sighed again.

'How can I tell until I try? Don't you think it would make me ill?'

'I'm almost sure it wouldn't!' I said firmly.

• 'If you really wish it, Jura!'

'Certainly I do. Try just a whiff!' said Lord Jura encouragingly. 'Dr. Tregenna, may I trouble you for the matches? Let me light it for you, Janie, and set it going. See, you draw in your breath a little, so, and then puff it out again before it gets down your throat, so!'

The Countess took it and blew at it with an air of suspicion.

‘Not that way, you silly girl! Draw the smoke in a little!’

She did so, and, puffing it out hurriedly, coughed for some time. Then she tried again, more successfully, while Lord Jura encouraged her to further efforts.

‘You’re getting on swimmingly. Why, you’ll be able to have a cigarette with me after dinner when we’re alone. You’ll soon be able to get through a whole one.’

‘Do you think so?’

She looked at him doubtfully and meditated.

‘Haven’t I seen you blow rings or something, Jura? That’s difficult, isn’t it?’

‘Yes, you’ll have to try some time before you do that, though; I know lots of fellows who can’t do it,’ and he sent a volley of little twisting circles floating up.

For answer came a huge vortex ring floating across from the Countess. He was watching his own, and didn’t see it until it was half-way to him.

‘By Jove, that’s a beauty!’ he said watching it. ‘You do them well, Doctor,’ and turned to me.

I kept a solemn face, but the Countess broke out into peals of laughter, and, jumping up, slipped across the room and went down on her knees by his chair.

‘You stupid, look!’ and she blew half a dozen as well as she could for laughing.

‘I say, what does this mean?’

He sat up in his chair, and looked first at one and then at the other.

‘It means,’ she said, ‘that I used to smoke, and he knew it.’

Lord Jura looked vexed, but evidently meant to say nothing more while I was there. However, she persisted.

‘Never mind Dr. Tregenna, Jura. Tell me if you’re vexed.’

‘I like to know what you do, that’s all.’

‘So you do, everything. I’ve not smoked once since we got engaged.’

‘But why didn’t you tell me?’

‘I didn’t want to shock you. I was quite ready to give it up. Now, don’t look at me like that. It wasn’t a man who taught me. I learnt it from that girl Moore who lived in the same house, and I didn’t a bit mind giving it up to please you.’

He patted her gently on the shoulder.

'That's all right. Of course I don't mind. Don't let everyone see you, that's all. People talk so about trifles. But what a humbug you are ! I'm no match for you two, I can see that !'

'I think I ought to beg your pardon for helping in the nonsense, Lord Jura,' I said. 'I didn't know but what Lady Jura smoked when alone with you, and I only wanted to remind her that I need make no difference. But I really meant what I said about ladies smoking in proper places, if they choose.'

He said there was nothing at all to apologise for, and then they set to work again, trying to find out how they could be useful to me.

'Come North for a holiday with us,' Lord Jura said, 'and we'll talk it over quietly. With the duffers who shoot every year now, one ought to have a surgeon out at every drive. It's only last year two of our beaters got peppered, and we had to send a boy ten miles for the doctor. He rode one of the horses pretty well to death.'

I shook my head.

'You're very kind, but I've work for the next six weeks.'

'Later we go down into the Mediterranean for as long as my wife likes, almost. Will you be our ship-surgeon there? We must have one.'

This was a tempting holiday. It was quite true they would need someone, but I was still awfully afraid of seeming to be ready to give up my independence, and I wouldn't promise.

'I should enjoy it very much,' I said, 'but I don't think I can manage it. However, if you'll tell me when you need to know one way or the other, I will be sure to decide in good time for you to get someone else.'

•So it was arranged, and I said good-bye.

'We're coming up to see you soon,' they announced, and I told them to fix a day and let me know.

We left Lady Jura in her boudoir, and Lord Jura came down with me, chatting of her most of the way and asking me if I thought her looking well, and whether the North of Scotland would be likely to suit her. I talked with as much professional gravity as I could assume, and told him I thought nothing could be better than the Highlands for both of them. Then I left, meditating over very different things as I went along.

Passing by the gardens I heard the band, and turned in to listen, for it was still too early for dinner. The grass was dry, and I stretched myself out on it, smoking and watching the people.

For some reason or another, fashion has decreed that it shall not be 'the thing' to attend these performances. Why, I don't know, not being wise in such matters. But I know that they are enjoyed by those students who care for that sort of amusement, and who think they can spare the time. Also nursemaids turn up with their charges, since everybody knows that babies in perambulators love music and the military.

I did not expect or wish to see anyone whom I knew, for I didn't want to talk, and the music was better from a little distance. I therefore kept on one of the grassy slopes, out of the crowd and hidden from the nearer part of it by some bushes.

I had not been there five minutes when I heard a soft step over the grass, and looking up saw Howell, whom I had not set eyes on since I met him in the post-mortem theatre.

It was a very hot afternoon still, but being a medical man, he of course felt bound to be in a black coat (which happened to be a frock) and in a tall hat. This is the invariable costume of the profession, chosen because of its well-known hygienic properties, one must suppose, as well as for its value as a stamp of morality and respectability.

Artists, authors and other irresponsible beings may wear comfortable hats and light clothes when the temperature makes them so inclined, but the medical man poses as the guardian of other people's health, and so, no doubt, in dressing as he does, he is doing what is best for his own.

But his dress and the hot afternoon had made Howell warm, and, finding a chair empty near me, he dropped into it, hidden, like me, by the bushes, so that it was very unlikely that any passing acquaintance would have the chance of saying that Dr. Howell couldn't be very busy, since he could sit in Princes Street Gardens and listen to the band. Yet he had more courage than most of his brethren.

I lay watching him lazily for a few minutes without being seen or wishing to disturb him, while he sat quietly thinking and poking holes in the path with the ferrule of his umbrella.



Then I remembered his promise to explain further, when he could, the results of the post-mortem, and finally I rolled a little nearer to him and wished him good afternoon.

'Good afternoon,' he answered, and then, seeing who it was, 'Oh, it's you, is it, Tregenna? Taking a rest after this morning's excitement?'

I nodded 'yes.'

'You look very comfortable down there.'

'So I am,' I said, 'or I shouldn't be here.'

He looked about for a moment, and then, putting his tall hat carefully on the seat, stretched himself by me in the shade.

'It's very hard if a man can't take it easy for five minutes, Tregenna.'

'Very hard, Dr. Howell. Are you very busy?'

He shook his head dolefully.

'So many men going out of town now the capping is over that one can't leave the Infirmary. Besides, I've some special work on.'

Not being able now to drive his umbrella ferrule into the gravel, he turned to kicking at the turf.

'Do you happen to remember a p.m. I came to about five weeks ago? One of Professor Richie's cases?'

'Ah, yes! I remember I noticed you. Final men don't often come there.'

'Too busy,' I said. 'But I was lazy that morning. I'm glad I came. It was an interesting case. Can you tell me anything more about it? You said you would tell us more, you know, if you could.'

Howell surveyed me in silence for a moment or two and then shook his head.

• 'There is nothing more to tell you.'

Of course I know it was a wicked thing to do, but I couldn't help it. The words slipped off my tongue before I knew what I was saying.

'So the Professor was right after all?'

'I didn't say so,' and he kicked at the turf more viciously than ever.

'But the case is done with, isn't it?'

'Not by a long way. You please remember that.'

This was getting interesting, and I sat up and stared at him.

'Is there any chance of hearing more of it then ?

He shrugged his shoulders.

'How can I tell? I haven't finished with it, that's all I know.'

'Have you had any more like it, Dr. Howell—if I may ask ?'

'Ask Professor Richie. He'll tell you that he's had a dozen himself—only he's pulled them through.'

'And what do you say ?'

'I say I've seen one, and went fifty miles to do so !'

'Where did you go ?'

'Where did I go? Why'—he pulled himself up short. 'No, I think you'll have to excuse me from telling you that. Why, it's getting quite late, isn't it? Must get home to dinner.'

'So must I,' I said, looking at my watch. 'But I'd like to know more about that case, Dr. Howell.'

'So you may some day if you look out, but I can't go talking about what's just a fad of my own. I've talked too much already. You stick to Richie until I have proved something different. He's my senior, you know.'

'So he says, I believe, doesn't he?' and we parted laughing ; but I made up my mind that I would ask Howell about the affair again before I left Edinburgh.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### CLEGG BREAKS LOOSE

DINNER was rather a dismal performance that night. In August most of the men usually quartered in the Rookery have gone off for the summer vacation. They are at home in England, or they are walking, climbing, fishing and lounging in the North, or by the sea. Those who are left are staying because they can't help it, and that does not tend to make them lively companions. They stay up to work, but the work is only second or third-rate. One cannot help dreaming, even while pretending to be busy, of burns and lochs, and grouse-moors and stubble-fields. The Pentlands, always to be seen to the south-west, tempt one perpetually, whenever the sun shines, to drop work and go out and bask on the sweet-scented heather. From my window I could see a barley field, which

reminded me always, as it ripened, of harvest and St. Partridge Day, and certain notes of the common city sparrow sound curiously like a partridge's call in the distance.

So, at the dinner-table, talk was not lively. A dozen men sat, as it were, at an island in the middle of a big waste of floor, using the dining-room, which at other times held over forty. One man had just got a letter from one of the absentees, written when off the west coast. It told how he was writing after dusk at a little cabin table, and described the cabin, with its seats, used for bunks at night, and the guns hanging on the racks all round. It was a still night, he said, with a rising tide, and the moon like a red ball. They were at the mouth of a little river and the sea-trout were passing up, jumping in the moonlight now and then. Also one of the men had just shouted down the cabin-stair to say that he had seen a salmon. In an hour's time they were going to draw the net that they had run out near the shore. We groaned in chorus, and I got up to open all the windows, with the only result that we heard the rattle of Princes Street and the rush and whistle of a passing train going West. Then the letter went on to describe their dinner. How at present they were mostly content with fresh fish and poultry. (Chorus of 'Poor fellows !' and groans.) They were obliged to put up with crabs and lobsters of their own catching, with fresh trout, fat, fighting yellow ones from the loch, and the silvery sea-trout, caught as they went up the stream ; salmon from the stake-net, and skate, caught with hand-lines, or speared on calm evenings as they lay in the sandy shallows, with rabbits now and then for a change.

All this, the writer said, while we groaned in bitter derision, was perhaps monotonous after a week or two, but later on they would have plenty of variety with the grouse and the partridges, blackcock and roe-deer, and even perhaps a red-deer, if they were lucky.

We grumbled and cursed our hard fate that kept us sweltering in town at such times, and two of the men sat and calculated expenses, coming to the conclusion at last that it would cost less to keep a boat on the west coast than to be a student—and would be much more profitable in the end.

One of them wondered whether his father—who was paying about two hundred a year to keep him at the University, which he had adorned for three years without passing any examina-



tion—would consider the profit of allowing him a hundred a year instead, with liberty to live where he chose.

‘Gad ! One could write a book on it, y’know, and make pots of money !’

‘Better learn to spell first !’ chimed in another man, who knew the speaker’s weak points. ‘You remember what Muirfield said after last class exam., Green ?’

This referred to Professor Muirfield’s sarcasm on Green’s orthography in his class examination, and his suggestion that neither was he, Muirfield, a spelling-master, nor was the University an infant school.

Green didn’t condescend to answer this reminder, but shook his head to the servant’s question if he’d have some more mutton.

‘No, thanks—mutton, by Jove ! It’s mutton and beef, beef and mutton from one end of the week to the other, while those beggars are lolling in their boat, and hauling up trout and salmon, skate and eels, by the dozen, and lythe and saithe as if all the sea belonged to them.

‘Gad ! I believe holiday work is a failure. One’s stale before the session begins. I shall write and tell the Governor so, and if he won’t have me home I’ll wire these fellows, and offer to share expenses. That letter has made me quite seedy. Here, I forgot ! Tregenna, give me a certificate of ill-health—a regular stiff one, mind—and I’ll give you your first fee. Five shillings, if it’s well put.’

I shook my head and laughed.

‘No go, old man ! Figure isn’t high enough for perjury. I believe we’d all be better over there, though. I’d give you all certificates for that.’

We pushed back our chairs with an impatient clatter, and went upstairs for our coffee. The same two who had been making such valuable calculations of expenses, took their coffee to one of the window seats, and, lighting their pipes, began to work out the thing more carefully.

Another man, who thought he had been ill used in his Second Professional, which was just over, wanted to ventilate his grievances by starting another students’ magazine (there was one already, which struggled on, apparently at its last gasp every week). He therefore took me on to the sofa and, bringing out pencil and paper, began to explain his views, while the rest gathered round the letter and heard it to the end.

The rest—that is, all except Clegg and Reid. They had both been very nearly silent through dinner, and Reid had not come in for coffee. As for Clegg, he stepped out with his cup on to the little balcony, where I meant to go too as soon as I could get away from the would-be journalist.

‘You see how it is, don’t you, Tregenna?’ asked the man with a grievance. ‘These bally Profs. have had us under their feet far too long, and I mean to bite. Will you help?’

‘My dear fellow, don’t be unfair with them. There’s no doubt that the profession is overcrowded, and——’

‘Oh, rot! That’s just like everyone else. As soon as a man gets through he swears the standard ought to be raised, and as soon as an extra-mural man gets a chair he goes to sleep in it, instead of improving the things he used to call a disgrace to the University.’

‘Well, tell me what you want to do and I’ll see if I can help, though I don’t know what use I can be. Make a few notes of points, and I’ll look them over.’

I moved to join Clegg, but he pulled me back.

‘I don’t need notes at all, no more do you. We want something that isn’t afraid to say what it thinks.’

‘There’s the “Undergraduate” already.’

‘Precious lot it thinks, and a precious deal it would say if it ever did think! Why, they’re subsidised by the Students’ Representative Council, and the Council is under the thumb of the Profs.!’

‘What a shocking state of affairs! So you mean to run an independent organ?’

‘That’s it!’ the man nodded decidedly. ‘We’ll make them sit up.’

‘Got the money?’

‘Oh, I’ve seen to all that. There’s a class fee I’m still due to one of ’em, I won’t say which, but he’s no friend of yours or mine, and he can wait twelve months. That’s four guineas, and I can easily make it up to five pounds cash to spare. That’ll get us through two numbers, and after that it’ll pay itself.’

‘Will it?’ I asked.

‘It’s bound to. You’ll agree to that when you see the programme.’

‘Well,’ I said, ‘for your benefit I may tell you that I once tried to run a mag. and it didn’t run long.’

‘My dear fellow, I can quite believe that. Mind, I don’t

say but what you've talent. I quite believe you could do it under advice, but you wouldn't understand the practical side. You and I could do it together, easy.'

'Thank you,' I said. 'It's very good of you to say so. Are there any others to help?'

'Oh, lots! The place is just full of men who could do that sort of thing if they only knew it, and I've got a ripping title—"The Antiseptic," and a motto, "Let us Spray!"; Isn't it ripping? That'll just show them straight away what we're going to do. Now, will you help or won't you?'

'I'll come to your first meeting, if I may?'

I said. 'When is it?'

'In September. The men I want will be back before the session begins, and we'll have it out on the first day of session.'

'All right. Let me have a reminder of it and I'll turn up if I can,' and I went out to the balcony.

Clegg was lying back in his chair with his face to the setting sun. A golden haze hung over the Forth and made the hills indistinct beyond it, and he was looking at them through half-shut eyes, when I passed him and sat down.

'Seems jolly quiet out there, doesn't it? I wish I was there!'

'You've just come that way, old man. The sun's setting behind Jura, you know. Why did you come back?'

'You got my letter, didn't you?'

'Yes—only at lunch-time, though. But I want to know more than that, and look here, Clegg, we really must talk it over for a few minutes. This can't go on any longer.'

He moved fretfully in his chair.

'I don't want to talk about it. What do you want to say?'

'I want to ask you a few questions, so that I may see what we can do. We needn't hurry over it, either questions or answers. Shall we stay here, or go to my room?'

He looked round him.

'It's pleasant enough here, as far as the place goes, if only those noisy beggars inside would keep out of the way. I never heard such a beastly racket in my life.'

It is true that a duet was going on inside, and that one man was half a bar ahead of the other, but a couple of months ago Clegg wouldn't have noticed that, except, perhaps, by going to

the piano and making the duet a trio, so I felt uneasy than ever.

'Come up to my room,' I said, getting up from my chair. 'We'll be quieter there, and just as comfortable by the open window.'

So we went through the Common Room, where two men were playing football with an old boxing-glove. One of them, as we passed, kicked it at Clegg, and hit him on the side of the head. He turned in an instant to jump at the man, but I saw the look on his face and threw my arms round him.

'Run!' I shouted to the men, and they, thinking there was going to be a chase as soon as they had a start, bolted through the doorway like rabbits, shouting as they went, while we swayed back and forward in the middle of the empty room.

We swung violently to and fro for some seconds, for he had thrown up his elbow against my throat, to push me off, and was almost choking me, while I was afraid to let go for fear it should become a pitched battle. I was getting tired, for he was always stronger than I, and fought like a madman now, but at last I managed to get his elbow off my throat and spoke as quietly as I could.

'I'm going to let go. I'm too tired to hold you any longer. Remember, if you hit me, you hit a man who won't hit back.'

I gathered up all my strength and threw him off, then, springing back, put my hands in my pockets and stood facing him.

He came up again to me at once. If I had moved to go or to raise my arm he would have been upon me, I saw, but I stood quiet and looked at him, always with my hands in my pockets, until at last he began to stammer and swear.

'What did you interfere for? Why shouldn't I give you the thrashing he would have got? I'd have broken his neck in half a minute.'

'You can thrash me if you like,' I said. 'You'll find it easy work. I shall keep my hands in my pockets.'

'What did you meddle for?'

'I didn't mean to stand here and see murder done. That's what was in your eyes. You wouldn't have thanked me afterwards.'

He stood and looked at me, and then began to tremble, sitting down at last and crying like a child.

‘My God, has it come to that?’

I felt so shaken myself, for I really thought murder had not been far off—that I didn’t speak at all, but stood very miserable and weak, looking down on him, while he sat and cried with his face in his hands.

Presently he looked up.

‘Let’s go to your room, Tree. Don’t let anyone see me like this, for mercy’s sake,’ and we went quietly up the stairs, side by side, getting into my room just in time. The men who had run from the Common Room, finding the game was getting tedious, were calling from the top of the stair, two flats up, where they thought they could hold their own. Neither of us answered, and presently they crept down and tried the door, but I had locked it, and, as for Clegg, he was tired out and never noticed them.

After shouting challenges and threats through the keyhole awhile they went away, on my pretending that I wanted to work, and we were troubled no more.

But I felt absurdly dull and tired, and could not talk yet. I flung myself into the easy-chair and stared moodily at the fireplace, with its fire laid but not lit. It looked so ugly and I felt so dismal that I got up and lit it, drawing my chair in close, and watching the sparks as the sticks sputtered and cracked.

Directly we came into the room, Clegg had gone across to the sofa by the window and flung himself on it. He lay stretched out there, and seemed as little inclined to speak as I was. The dusk grew, the lights of Princes Street sprang up in twos and threes, the traffic lessened, the full moon rose, and the August night had fairly begun before either of us moved or spoke, he by the window and I by the fire, which burnt up and burnt out without my stirring to see to it.

## CHAPTER XXV

### A PROFESSIONAL CONSULTATION

At last I roused myself, and, turning round in my chair, looked over at Clegg. He was sitting up stiffly and still, except for his head, which I could see moving slowly and steadily, as if he watched something round the room. I followed his look,

but saw nothing more than the old, familiar things. His glance travelled round towards me, and I confess, as I realised that whatever he saw, or thought he saw, was coming in my direction and drawing near through the shadows, I shivered in my chair.

‘Clegg!’

I almost screamed his name.

‘Yes.’

His voice was monotonous, and even mournful; his head continued to move slowly.

‘What are you doing?’

‘I am watching It.’

‘Where is it, and what is it?’

‘It is behind you.’

I gripped the arms of the easy-chair, with the feeling that if I once lost hold of myself I could stay there no longer with him, and I looked behind me.

Nothing!

I got up from the chair, and went slowly across to him. I felt as if any little pluck I ever had was oozing away. It was as much as I could do not to turn and look behind me as I went.

I sat down beside him, and, remembering what had happened before in the same room, took both his hands in mine.

Presently, just as in the last time, he began to tremble violently, and at last fell to sobbing.

I was no longer able to scold him. It was too pitiful, and I was not much better than he for the time. I sat quiet, and he was the first to speak.

‘It’s too bad, Tree. I mustn’t worry you like this. You see what a fool I’ve come to be. I’ll go with you and see anyone you like to-morrow.’

‘That’s right,’ I answered. ‘Come, I feel a different man after hearing you say that. Take time now, and tell me quietly how things have been the last day or two. It’ll help you perhaps to get it off your mind, and, besides, we’ll be able to settle better after that what man we shall go to. What were you looking at just now?’

‘It was the face I told you of. It has haunted me again for the last three days and nights, but I’m not fighting it so well as I did last time. It’s more with me. I see it in the broad daylight among crowds sometimes, or it meets me at a

corner of the stair.' He stopped speaking, and fell to shuddering again.

'There's something more awful too, this time.'

'Tell me all about it.'

'It talks.'

'At dinner to-night it was opposite to me, and talked all the time loudly. I couldn't make out what you fellows said, or how you heard one another.'

'What does it say?'

'It talks of death and judgment. It tells me I'm dying, and that we're all dying, and that I shall meet it again after.'

'After what?'

'After death, Tree. It's my own sin risen up against me, to haunt me till death, and after.'

'What sin?' I asked.

'All the sin of my life!' and he wandered off into a babbling confession of boyish faults, wasted time, and lost opportunities, till I could listen no longer.

Here was religious mania in a most exaggerated form, and if it could fall upon a simple, strong fellow like Clegg, then who was safe? My knowledge of such diseases was very small, for it lies outside the ordinary course of study, and was one of the things I had reserved as a post-graduate course, but I knew enough to believe that it would be quite useless to argue the thing. If he saw a thing that I couldn't see, there was no proof to satisfy him that it was not there. I must take him to a more experienced man.

'That will do,' I said gently, breaking into his rambling account of past misdeeds. 'There's no use in tiring you, you've said quite enough. I wish, though, that I had as little to confess. But we'll talk it over with someone else the first thing to-morrow.'

This being settled he seemed relieved, and began to confess other things to me. How, for example, he had lately suffered the tortures of the damned, because, being so sinful himself, he had suspected others of being no better, or even worse. 'I have thought I saw sin of every kind on my friends' faces,' he told me. 'I have seen murder written on their foreheads, and now, see how near I was to it myself to-night!'

In my heart I believed this to be true, for both his sudden passion and his weak and unmanly break-down just after, showed that the nervous strain had destroyed his self-control.

But I said nothing more than that I was glad he was willing to talk freely about it, and that from to-night he must put these suspicions out of his mind, and feel that he was going to be nursed through it all.

'You've no more responsibility,' I told him. 'Whatever you think, you must at any rate know that you're ill, and so you're my patient. You're going to do what I tell you in everything, and you're going to think about nothing. Now, come and help me to get your bed in. It's too late to call up the servants, and you're going to sleep here.'

He thanked me humbly, and followed me, doing what I told him as a child might. On my side I gave orders without the least hesitation. I had taken the responsibility of his conduct on my shoulders, until I could shift it to stronger ones, and I meant my word to be law for the time, whatever I might have to do to make it so.

But I had no trouble at all. We made up his bed by mine, and I gave him a strong hypnotic, and, letting him know that he had a full dose, I went into my sitting-room, to read there with the door open between us until I found he was asleep. Even then I could not make up my mind to sleep myself. After all it was not a working time for me, and one night's rest one way or the other wouldn't matter much. So I went back to my book, re-lit my fire, made myself a cup of coffee, and read away there until the morning.

He seemed to sleep well until as late as seven o'clock, and then, while I was washing, jumped up suddenly in the bed, and I hurried to him at once.

'What's wrong, man? Here I am!'

He turned and stared at me.

'Was it you who called then?'

'I never spoke,' I said. 'What woke you?'

'It did!'

I felt fresher after my bath, and brighter too in the sunlight, and I tried to laugh it off.

'It's called you in very good time. Now that you're awake we may as well go down to the baths. Up you get!'

He rose as obediently as ever and dressed at once, after which we went down the stair together, out into the fresh August air, and away to the baths. There I dived and swam, and felt the better for it, but it frightened me to notice that, just as he was stooping for a plunge, he clutched at the ladder and



drew back. The face had met him, staring from the water, but I dashed past him, shattering it into ripples as I dived, and when I rose to the top he followed with a defiant shout, and said nothing of it to me.

It was still early when we got back, and we had breakfast quietly alone, though, all through it, he had the air of one who is listening to some speaker, and when I talked to him I had sometimes to repeat things before he heard me.

We had finished at half-past eight, and I roused him up at once.

'We'll walk a little, and settle where we shall go, Clegg. Wherever it is we ought to be there by nine.'

He came away obediently, with the same absent air, and I sighed with relief to think how soon my responsibility would be divided. If it had been another man I don't think I should have felt it so much, but I found to my sorrow that, where Clegg was concerned, I seemed unable to look at the thing steadily.

As we went, the battalion from the Castle swung past us merrily to the sound of the pipes, and we stayed a moment to watch them. His ambition had been to become an army surgeon, and when they tramped by I knew he was thinking that would never be now.

'Come now, Clegg,' I said, 'what wise man is going to have the credit of setting you right? I'd like to see Macdonald.'

Macdonald was the best man I knew in Edinburgh for nervous diseases, and I felt it was getting too serious to beat about the bush any longer; but Clegg shook his head.

'Macdonald is out of town. I asked yesterday. I want to see Richie.'

'Richie? And why Richie?'

'Why not Richie?' he said irritably.

'Anyone you believe in,' I said cheerfully, and thought that after all there was no doubt Richie was a good man in some ways, and that my personal likes and dislikes had nothing to do with it. So to Richie's we went, and, getting there early, were not kept long after I had given my name, owing to the professional etiquette of never keeping a brother practitioner kicking his heels in the waiting-room.

Richie rose from his writing-table to greet us, affable and smiling as ever. If he was disappointed at finding that I only

brought him a medical student, from whom no fee would be got, I think that was excusable, but he never showed it, nor did he show, what I knew to be his private opinion, that I should have been spun the month before. On the contrary, he offered me his hand cordially, and said that he congratulated himself on being probably my first consultant. After all, I felt and still feel that students are severe critics, and I repented somewhat of my private grudge against him. I have more than once felt the need of kindly judgment on my actions since, and when I have failed to get it I have remembered my own shortcomings in that respect. I gave him a summary of Clegg's troubles, and he looked at him attentively.

'What about holidays?'

'He was away for three weeks with me,' I said, 'and came back because of this.'

Then he inquired as to diet, sleep, exercise, family history, and so on through all the usual routine. He examined his eyes, tested his nervous system in the ordinary ways, questioned him as to tobacco and alcohol, and then with a 'H'm, yes!' sat and studied him, with his finger-tips joined against his under lip.

'I think we'll soon set you right, Mr. Clegg,' he said at last. 'Youth on your side, you know, and strength and health, except for this little temporary trouble. I am very glad to have seen you, and if you're not better in a week, I hope my friend, Dr. Tregenna here, will bring you again. Now, my dear sir, if you don't mind going back to the waiting-room for a few minutes, I'll make some little suggestions to Dr. Tregenna. We must forget that you're a medical yourself, just for the moment you know, ha! ha!'

With that he patted Clegg out of the room, and shutting the door gently, came back and sat down.

'Let us go over the points, Dr. Tregenna. Our friend has hallucinations of a terrifying nature, also he has had suspicions of his friends. He has acknowledged both. Further, these things are obviously putting a severe strain upon his powers of self-control.'

I had not cared, before Clegg, to mention the scene of the night before in the Common Room, but I spoke of it now, adding that I thought the results might have been serious if no one had interfered.

Richie nodded his head gravely.

'Quite so, Dr. Tregenna, quite so. Have you any reason to suspect periodicity in these attacks?'

'I notice that he has had almost a free month,' I answered, 'and I wish I knew whether it would be likely to be so again. If you thought it likely, I should ask you to consider whether I should not be justified in watching over him myself.'

'H'm, yes. My friend, Dr. Macdonald, is away, I think?'

'Yes,' I said, 'otherwise perhaps I should not have troubled you, Professor. We know how valuable your time is, and also that this is not the branch of study you interest yourself most in.'

Richie nodded his head gravely.

'True, true. Still, Dr. Tregenna, the earnest physician must be ready to meet all forms of disease, and I trust, to the best of my poor ability, I am willing to do so. However, as you know, my friend Macdonald is *facile princeps* in his own department, and I should have liked to hear his views on the matter. But are you busy again yet?'

'No,' I said. 'Not for a week at least.'

'And you are willing to take charge?'

I nodded my head.

'We are old friends, Professor, and I know he'd do as much for me. If I may consult you in emergency, or if he still needs attention at the end of the week?'

'Certainly, certainly! You know my consulting hours. For the time I would recommend one of the bromides in large doses in a little combination that I have found valuable. May I write out the prescription which I would suggest?'

He wrote it, and reminding me of the great need of watchfulness for a day or two, after which he thought the attack would pass off for the time, and with a word on the importance of occupation and absence of all excitement, he bowed me out of the room. Just as I reached the door of the consulting-room he called me back.

'I think, Dr. Tregenna, that even if this attack passes off satisfactorily, I would see Dr. Macdonald before the corresponding period of next month. I know that he cannot be absent for more than a fortnight just now.'

I thanked him and promised to remember it, then beckoning Clegg out, went off with him for a long stretch down by the shore, which he said made him feel brighter again.

## CHAPTER XXVI

## A SECRET SOCIETY

ON the evening that we spent at Mrs. Tweedie's, Clegg and I had promised to dine there the day after the capping, if they had not left town. While we were on the west coast she had written to remind us, saying that they would not leave until a couple of days later, and that they had invited a few other friends.

Before talking with Clegg, I had felt it impossible to say that we could not come. After our chat with Richie and the walk that followed, he seemed so much brighter that I still hesitated to telegraph about it. A hostess must be long-suffering indeed, if she will forgive two men for wiring a refusal on the morning of a dinner, when they have had a month's invitation. I couldn't go without Clegg, and I didn't want to say that he was ill. Pleasant society and a bright evening were the best things for him, if he could keep his troubles in the background for the time. I put the question to him plainly. Should we go or not? Did he think it would be too much for him, and could he, feeling better again as he did that day, be sure of being able to join in ordinary dinner-table conversation without a strain upon himself?

I felt it was bold, and that, if anything happened in consequence, I should be blamed, and justly blamed, but he had shown all through a strong wish and considerable ability to hide his private affairs from everyone except myself, and I thought he could do so still. Also I knew perfectly well that, except on a single point, he was as able to talk and act as rationally as I was, and that he knew his own weakness in that one direction. Clegg was also innately a gentleman, and I had no more fear of his calling the attention of the other guests to anything unpleasant which might force itself upon him, than I should have had of his abusing the wine. So, when he declared that he wished to go, and wouldn't inconvenience Mrs. Tweedie on any account by staying away at such short notice, I felt quite safe about it, and only hoped that he might have a pleasant evening after all.

We dressed, and went down together that night, reaching

the house in good time. On being shown into the drawing-room we found others whom we knew. There was Maxwell-Farquharson, and there was Grosvenor, also Caird, my artist friend, with his wife, Reay-Carter with his wife, five other ladies whom I scarcely knew, and the last to come was Reid, of whose invitation I had not heard. A couple of minutes after he came, dinner was announced, and I had the honour of taking down Mrs. Reay-Carter, who informed me at once that she had not dined there before, and that she felt honoured at being invited.

'Now I'm sure from what I've heard and seen of your friend, Mrs. Tweedie, that you're all delightfully clever, queer people here to-night, Dr. Tregenna. You must tell me all about them, when there's a little more noise.'

'I'm afraid I should shock you,' I said.

'How delightful! No, no sherry, thanks.'

'Yes,' I said, looking cautiously around me, 'this dinner-party has been carefully chosen. There is more in this than you would suppose, Mrs. Reay-Carter—or are you trying to deceive me!'

All of which merely meant, that I was feeling a slight reaction after the anxiety of the last night and morning, and was inclined to play the fool to save myself the trouble of thinking.

'How deceive you, Dr. Tregenna?'

I looked at her fixedly.

'I believe you are one of *us*,' I said solemnly, 'and I will show you that I know how to keep my oath.'

On this she meditated. She was an honourable woman, but here was a delightful mystery, and a chance of unveiling it; she made one noble effort not to take advantage of my stupidity.

'I don't know what you mean, Dr. Tregenna. Do tell me!'

This was difficult, since I hadn't the least idea myself, but I plunged further into the darkness.

A friend, knowing Mrs. Tweedie's tastes, had lately sent her a table ornament of some kind, taking the form of a lotus, and my eyes chanced upon it as it stood before us now, in the middle of the table. I pointed to it solemnly.

'If you did not know,' I asked, 'if you were not one of us, would you be here when that is brought out?'

Mrs. Reay-Carter's sense of honour could resist no longer. Mrs. Reay-Carter fell.

'True,' she murmured, 'quite true.'

'You know as well as I do,' I went on, 'that such a mistake was only made once, and' (I lowered my voice) 'you know how it ended!'

I saw her shudder apprehensively and look at her husband. She was evidently wondering how he had belonged to this hidden mystery without her knowledge.

'It is so difficult, you know,' I went on, 'to detect any such mistake once made. The formalities at the meeting itself are so simple.'

She gave a sigh of relief.

'My head is such a bad one for these things, Dr. Tregenna. I'm always afraid of forgetting—and then what would happen?'

'Ah!' I returned. 'What would happen!' and proceeded to go on with my dinner, having eaten my fish without being able to remember even what it had been.

I was not to get off so easily.

'My poor head!' Mrs. Reay-Carter repeated, 'and I've such a bad memory for figures! Would you mind going over the—the ceremonial with me, Dr. Tregenna, beforehand?'

'What has a memory for figures got to do with it?' I asked, raising my eyebrows, and turning in my chair to look at her.

'Nothing whatever, of course,' she said faintly.

This was getting too much. In racking my brain to keep her occupied, I had already said 'Yes' when offered something I didn't want, and had emptied my hock glass at a gulp.

'It's very simple, you know,' I said, for really I was beginning to be afraid that the dinner would be spoilt for both of us.

'You only need to follow the rest,' and I turned hastily for relief to the lady on my other hand.

As dinner went on I watched Clegg, and was glad to see that there was nothing to attract attention. He had brought down a stranger who was not likely to notice anything unusual in his manner, and besides, he seemed fairly attentive.

As a rule Mrs. Tweedie's dinners were noted for the splendid judgment she showed in pairing her guests, but to-night, as she mournfully confessed to me afterwards, there had been

mistakes, due to some friends having been obliged to decline at the last moment—on hearing which I was thankful for having decided we would not do the same.

In consequence of these mishaps, Reay-Carter was seated by the gushing damsel whom I had taken down to supper on Mrs. Tweedie's Evening. She rattled on through the usual routine remarks of theatre, music, Edinburgh, and so on, while he gazed solemnly at his plate or wineglass, and found no appropriate topic therein. I heard him say,

'No. I, ah—do not cycle, nor does my wife. I, ah—do not approve of cycling for ladies!' whereupon the gushing damsel, whom I had seen on a bicycle only the day before, subsided for a moment into silence.

Mrs. Tweedie, at the foot of the table, was having a scheme explained to her by Grosvenor, while I could see that she was trying to catch what was said by Maxwell-Farquharson, who discoursed Buddhism to a lady who, I had heard, was a strong Calvinist.

Mrs. Reay-Carter, I saw with remorse, was thinking more of any possible ceremonial than of her dinner, and I at last decided that I must relieve her mind.

'So we shall not go through it to-night after all,' I muttered to her.

'Through what, Dr. Tregenna? I didn't notice.'

'Through the ceremonial. Don't you see that the centre cloth is *green*?'

'Ah, so it is to be sure. That settles it, doesn't it?'

'Of course,' I said, and had the pleasure of seeing that Mrs. Reay-Carter showed a much better appetite afterwards.

No dread oppressed Mr. Tweedie's cheerful soul of the dinner being in any sense a failure, and indeed failure could not be while he sat at the head of his table.

He had brought down a stout lady of solemn and dignified deportment, whose intense air of propriety would have made me feel that even moderate cheerfulness was impossible, and indeed wicked. But his stout heart was not so easily daunted. He insinuated sly jokes between the soup and the fish, he told her an excellent story against himself, he saw that her glass was re-filled, while he listened sympathetically and respectfully to her tale of her heart's pride, a son on foreign service, and made her touch glasses with him and toast our army when no one but myself saw them. She thawed, she smiled, she chatted

and he led her into conversation with Caird on something interesting to both, and then turned his attention to the rest of us.

He must have heard Reay-Carter on cycling, for he announced that he was going to get a bicycle for Mrs. Tweedie and make her learn, whereat Reay-Carter's neighbour smiled gratefully on him and recovered her spirits. He gave Mrs. Reay-Carter a chance of bringing in the name of the Countess of Jura, and congratulated her husband on his latest paper in the British Medical. He called down to me that he wanted to propose my name at the only club I cared to belong to, and told Grosvenor that he must have five minutes chat on the latest scheme before we went upstairs, and Grosvenor, who was looking more than usually radiant and excited, was so rash as to tell him that Edinburgh would soon be surprised.

The whole table brightened. I heard Reay-Carter confess to his charge that, although he was no cyclist, he had been very fond of skating as a boy, which was long ago, he added drily; and although he shook his head mournfully and looked at his wife when she suggested a fresh attempt next winter, I felt that a few such dinners might go a long way towards renewing his youth.

As for Mrs. Reay-Carter, she began a long conversation on secret societies with Maxwell-Farquharson, while Clegg found that the lady on his left had a brother who had played with him against Oxford in the 'Varsity Fifteen, and Mrs. Caird told me of the progress of Joan of Arc, which I asked permission to go up and see again soon. Mr. Tweedie's jokes flew round the table until even the servants had difficulty in keeping solemn faces, and one was seized with a fit of choking and had to retreat hastily, coming back presently with a penitent air and a red face.

When Mrs. Tweedie's eye collected the ladies, so to speak, and we rose to let them pass, there was a general feeling that it must be much later than we had thought, and we gathered round our host after they had passed out, with little words of regret that the evening was already so far gone, settling down at the same time to pass the decanters and cigarettes, with a virtuous determination that we would make the best of what was left to us.

Grosvenor wedged himself in between Maxwell-Farquharson and Reay-Carter, and, marvellous to say, instead of telling



them of a scheme, began to ask them what they thought of some recent experiments in physiological psychology. Mr. Tweedie began talking to me about the Club of which he had spoken before, and I could not catch the precise meaning of Grosvenor's questions, but I gathered that he had heard of certain mental processes by which, he was told, the intellectual strength was increased beyond all ordinary belief. Was this possible! I bent forward to hear the two opinions, but could hear nothing definite, except the sonorous voice of Mr. Tweedie declaring that it gave him great pleasure to be my Godfather at the club.

Then Grosvenor gave a hypothetical case.

Supposing A. had an intellectual feat to perform, were there means not known to the vulgar, by which he could call upon his reserve forces for conception and execution?

Reay-Carter said 'no' at once, and at the same moment Maxwell-Farquharson, eyeing him intently, murmured that such things had been asserted.

Just as a courteous and formal argument began between Reay-Carter and Maxwell-Farquharson, I was forced by Mr. Tweedie to consider whether I could appear before the afore-said club (which had certain mysterious regulations of its own) on a certain day in October. By the time that I had collected my thoughts and told Mr. Tweedie that I would hold myself ready to appear, the discussion was over, and all that I heard was from Maxwell-Farquharson, who ended by saying, 'Well, gentlemen, the matter is one less in my province than in yours. It is not at all a point of law, but one both of medicine and psychology, yet I may say I have heard from men in whom I have confidence that such things are possible. The important point is that the power is absolute and therefore not to be put into the hands of any but the most absolutely trustworthy.'

At this Reay-Carter shrugged his shoulders in polite incredulity, while Grosvenor said 'Of course,' and then my attention was called off again by the servant who brought round coffee.

After that, during the few minutes that we stayed downstairs, the chat was more general. Mr. Tweedie, Reay-Carter, Maxwell-Farquharson and Caird were all leaving town that week, and compared notes as to plans and past experiences. Neither of us Rookery men saw a chance of getting off just

then, but as for me I heard longingly, while Clegg absently fingered his wineglass and Reid listened, or seemed to listen, in silence, with his hands in his pockets and his chin dropped on his chest.

Nothing else was talked of until we moved to go upstairs.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### FATE THE FIDDLER

WE rose at last, and went up the stair to the drawing-room, Caird and Maxwell-Farquharson leading the way, Clegg and I coming together behind them, with Reid alone, and Reay-Carter, Grosvenor, and Mr. Tweedie bringing up the rear. Mr. Tweedie was telling something good to Reay-Carter as he clutched him affectionately by the arm, and Reay-Carter was laughing, yes, laughing loudly, and caught at the balustrade for support, stopping on mid-stair to enjoy the joke thoroughly.

I leant towards Clegg.

'Getting on all right, old fellow?'

He looked at me and nodded.

'Better than I expected. Nothing like a good dinner for the blue devils, 'Tree,' and his voice sounded so much brighter that I was surprised, and looked at him again.

'Are you quit of the thing to-night, then?'

He shook his head.

'No such luck! It cropped up two or three times at dinner, but I was able to fight it off.'

He smiled at me bravely, and I gripped his hand as Caird and Maxwell-Farquharson opened the drawing-room door and passed in before us.

'Good old Clegg! We'll repeat the prescription somewhere to-morrow night,' and we two went in, followed by Reid, after whom there was an interval, while Reay-Carter enjoyed a last explosion at the top of the stair, and one heard the slapping sound made when a man who is enjoying a good joke expresses it by bringing his open hand heavily on to his thigh.

As we went towards the ladies I saw from Mrs. Reay-Carter's glance that she recognised the voice, and wondered

what possessed her dignified spouse. But it was the effect of nothing stronger than Mr. Tweedie's cheery company, and presently the two came in together, still bubbling over with some quaint recollection.

Mrs. Reay-Carter beckoned me to her.

'Are you quite sure that nothing will happen to-night?'

'Quite,' I said, and wondered what course Mrs. Reay-Carter would adopt to get further information from her husband afterwards.

Just then Mrs. Tweedie came across to us, and asked her to sing, which Mrs. Reay-Carter proceeded to do with her accustomed grace and total absence of feeling. Mr. Tweedie followed her with a jolly old ballad, and then Reid was asked if he had brought his violin. Nothing seemed to rouse him that night, and I had not seen him speak to anyone except when he was spoken to.

Mrs. Tweedie had noticed this, I think, and was anxious to bring him more into touch with the rest of us. She was quite right in supposing that his playing would do that, if he were in the mood, but all the same I watched him with some misgivings when he went downstairs to fetch the fiddle, which he did not like to see anyone else touch, and, taking it from the case, where it lay swathed in silk handkerchiefs, began to tune it.

How readily the musician is shown! A chord or two on the piano, or a turn on the fiddle, and the man who is master of his instrument is known. Even the tuning that night would have been enough by itself to show that Reid was a passionate player. The strings rang out, moaning while he twitched them as though he were pulling at heart-strings, and when he tucked the fiddle under his chin, and drew out a long opening note, it wailed like a human voice. He played a Hungarian air, that would be a bright dance but could not, and that carried Hungary's wild melancholy all through it, in an ever-recurring undertone. If the people danced to that, the women would sigh as they danced, and the men would move with a hand on the sword-hilt. It began with a sigh and ended with a sob, and we who sat or stood round to listen, could have applauded more loudly if the air had touched us less. Instantly they asked him for more, but he begged Mrs. Tweedie to let someone else have a turn first, saying that he was tired, and promising to play again later on if she wished. So she turned

to me, and I, like a fool, being unwilling to make a fuss when everyone else was so ready, although I knew that I could not sing a bit, went to the piano and sat down. Then I remembered that not only could I do nothing without music except feeble things of my own, but also that the only song I could get through was not of a lively description. However, there I was on the music-stool, and I must do something before I could move, so I sang at once, to get through with it.

*THE KING OF NORROWAY*

THERE was a King of Norroway  
Who had a daughter fair to see ;  
No other maid so blythe and gay  
In all God's earth he deemed could be.

Blythe and gay, high and low,  
All the one dark way must go.  
And long ago the grass and clay  
Have hid that King of Norroway,  
That mighty King of Norroway.

This mighty King of Norroway,  
He vowed his daughter fair to see  
Should be the prizè and wife alway  
Of him who fought to victory.

Blythe and gay, high and low,  
All the one dark way must go.  
And long ago the grass and clay  
Have hid that King of Norroway,  
That mighty King of Norroway.

So long ago in Norroway,  
Beside his daughter fair to see,  
He watched the lists the livelong day  
To give the gage of victory.

Blythe and gay, high and low,  
All the one dark way must go.  
And long ago the grass and clay  
Have hid that King of Norroway,  
That mighty King of Norroway.

There rode a stranger through the fray  
No living man that face might see,  
But ere the ending of the day  
The dead proclaimed his victory.

## THE CRUCIFORM MARK

Blythe and gay, high and low,  
 All the one dark way must go.  
 And long ago the grass and clay  
 Have hid that King of Norrøway,  
 That mighty King of Norrøway.

He pledged the King of Norrøway,  
 He kissed his daughter fair to see,  
 Until her face grew cold and grey,  
 For aye Death wins the victory.

Blythe and gay, high and low,  
 All the one dark way must go.  
 And long ago the grass and clay  
 Have hid that King of Norrøway,  
 That mighty King of Norrøway.

Long before I had finished, Mrs. Tweedie, anxious that I should have all possible credit, had whispered through the room that the ballad was my own.

'Words *and* music,' I heard her say, after which the rest could do no less than applaud when I stopped, and did their duty admirably.

Mrs. Reay-Carter called me to her at once.

'Your very own !' she said. 'Well, I always told people you were clever !' which left me under the unpleasant impression that people were in the habit of going out of their way to tell her very much the opposite.

'Where *is* Norrøway, Dr. Tregenna ? Oh, *Norway* ! Well, why didn't you say so ? Oh, rhythm ! Of course, yes, I see. How quaint it all is, and amusing !'

I told her how glad I was that she was entertained.

'Oh very ! And the Lists, you know. Now tell me, weren't you thinking of the Lists for the Finals when you wrote that ?'

I wasn't, but I weakly let her think I was, and she said that she knew it at once, at which Mr. Tweedie, who was standing by and heard her, apparently with great interest, suddenly became absorbed in a book of photos of his own taking, and didn't look my way during the next five minutes, for which I inwardly thanked him.

It was time for us all to think of going. A couple of cabs were announced and the ladies began to stir, but Mrs. Tweedie did not mean to let Reid off his promise.

'Something of your own, Mr. Reid, please.' And Reid

took up his fiddle again, touching it gently on this string and that, and coaxing it into perfect tune.

'I can't do anything very lively,' I heard him say at last.

'Give us something creepy, then,' Mrs. Tweedie answered laughing, and as he, without answering further, brought out the first note, she gave a little 'ah' of pretended horror and turned the gas low to aid the effect.

The weather had changed since sunset. Once or twice I had heard the rain beat against the windows, and had noticed that the wind was rising; but both wind and rain were heard only to be forgotten, or to increase one's comfort in the warm, well-lighted rooms.

Now it was different.

As the violin sighed softly through the opening bars in the darkness, the wind rose and answered it, while the rain's pattering accompaniment ran distinctly underneath it all. I had heard this thing before, and, remembering when and where, I looked at Clegg, but by the glimmering light could see no more than that he lay back a little on the settee, watching Reid as he played.

The wind rose outside and drove the rain against the windows, shaking the window-frames and moaning away down the street; but, moan as it would, it could only help the violin, whose cry went through the riot of the outer air as a damned soul might. Presently, I do not know how it was, maybe the keynote of the room was struck, I cannot explain it, the room seemed to throb and vibrate, and I with it, and shaping itself out of the shadows came something.

At first it was so vague, so indistinct, that I, leaning against the window, played with the fancy, as children play with fire. It was so eerie, a little more fancy would make it so awful, and I leant there and watched the thing, and said trite words to myself about imagination and the causes that excite it.

Then I looked away and told myself that this something had gone, and knew myself a liar as I said it, and, looking back, was in no way surprised to find it there, growing every moment more distinct, while the violin called it, entreated it, commanded it, mocked it, and worshipped it.

Clearer it grew and clearer, until I saw the Sphinx face which I had seen before, with its wide, immovable, inscrutable eyes, and its bitter mocking mouth.

Then the E string snapped, and the wind howled round

the corner of the street and died away, the face vanished, and nothing could be heard but the persistent, soft pattering of the rain on the windows, and a long-drawn sigh through the room.

When I turned up the gas and looked around me the spell was already broken.

Reay-Carter was feeling his collar and looking at the clock. Mrs. Reay-Carter, a little white about the lips, was moving to say good-night, with a laughing remark on the queer things one saw with music like that. The rest were stirring and turning to one another, while Reid sat silent and alone with his ear to his violin, as if it were still whispering messages to him, though we heard no more. Clegg and I were ready to leave with Reid for the Rookery, but Mr. Tweedie would not hear of it.

'Quite right, maybe, for sober married folk to go home at ten, laddies, but you gay bachelors must stay for a smoke. Farquharson, you've no wife to take home or to go home to. You'll set these boys an example.'

So Caird and Reay-Carter, with their wives, went off; the other ladies were put into their cabs, one being escorted by Grosvenor; and we, that is Mr. and Mrs. Tweedie, Farquharson, Clegg, and myself, went back to the drawing-room. Reid could not be persuaded to stay. 'He bent his long lean figure over Mrs. Tweedie's hand, wishing her good-night, with almost excessive thanks for her kindness, and she, with her constant kindness for those who seemed to be lonely, insisted on going to the door with him, pressing him, as she did so, to change his mind and wait for us. Afterwards she told me that he said he could not, because he had so much to do and so far to go that night, and, shaking hands once more, tucked his fiddle case under his waterproof and went off alone, through the rain into the darkness.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### MURDER OR — ?

IN the dining-room, while Mr. and Mrs. Tweedie talked to Clegg, Maxwell-Farquharson was particularly pleasant to me. I saw perfectly well that he was thinking of our last meeting, as

I was, and that he wished to rid my mind of any feeling I might still have against him.

In this he succeeded altogether. I could not forget what had taken place between him and Miss Verney, but I saw that at the worst he had only been misled by something. It was easy to decide that he would not wilfully annoy anyone, and least of all a woman who could be accused of nothing worse than want of courtesy to him. He said nothing of Miss Verney, but spoke of Reid, and asked me whether he was often as silent and absorbed as he had been that evening.

‘He is always queer,’ I said ; ‘but we are used to it, and besides, one makes great allowances for such a clever musician. What do you think of his playing?’

To this Maxwell-Farquharson replied that he was no judge ; but I persisted, for we were proud of Reid at the Rookery, even when he plagued us most with his uncertain temper.

‘Surely you think it a creditable performance?’ but Farquharson shook his head.

‘No more creditable to him than to his fiddle, if you insist on having my opinion.’

‘But the fiddle is merely the instrument,’ I insisted. ‘He plays on it.’

‘Being played upon in his turn,’ added Farquharson. ‘Not long ago, some people, hearing that uncanny thing he played last, would have said he was possessed. Such ideas are out of date now, though they may return in another shape, as many things do ; but one can still hold, without being thought superstitious, that a man who plays as he did is possessed, in the sense of being far too much under the influence of outside things. He is morbidly sensitive and wanting in self-control. Some people could play upon him as easily as he plays upon his fiddle.’

‘We find him difficult enough to manage,’ I said.

‘You have not learnt how to play upon him,’ he retorted.

‘It is not included in the recognized medical curriculum. But it is a thing every medical man has to learn early or late. He succeeds or fails according to his aptness and his methods.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Nothing more than that you all must learn how to control your patients and to gain their confidence, if you wish to help them to the fullest possible extent. Some men govern others by their physical superiority, some by intuition. Pardon me if



I tell you that you would do better in that if you had more self-confidence. I have known men to look on modesty as a virtue, and to assume and cultivate it until it became a vice.'

I flushed hot, and laughed awkwardly, for the cap fitted me just well enough to wear.

'One feels that one really knows so little.'

'Probably not more, but also not less, than most other people. One is not likely to be remarkable in either direction. You can deceive people by pretending ignorance just as much as by pretending wisdom, and the one is as hypocritical as the other, isn't it?'

He paused and looked at me smiling.

'I'm only reading myself a lecture, you know. There's always a temptation to humbug both oneself and others. The man who proclaims himself the chief of sinners or the biggest fool is an egotist.'

'What is the remedy?'

'Keep your eyes open, that's all, and try to see things as they are, and not as they might be. Ah! I see you smile, and I know myself to be suspected of romancing, and not of critical examination in anything. But remember that fresh truths, or old truths retold, may seem much stranger than time-honoured fictions.'

He stopped and looked at his watch.

'Even gay bachelors, as Tweedie calls us, must go home some time, and these good people would never turn a man out, if he kept them up until breakfast-time.'

'That's very true,' I said. 'At any rate I've known men stay until two or three in the morning.'

'You go South, I think, and I go North. But you are not leaving Edinburgh yet, are you?'

'No, I expect to spend the autumn here, at any rate.'

'Ah! then I hope I may meet you again soon, and I will not bore you so much with my fads. Please try to take it as a compliment, for I don't talk to everybody I meet. Good-night.'

He left, and we soon followed, after lingering awhile over our good-byes to the Tweedies, who were to leave early in the morning.

We had only reached the end of Heriot Row when, to our astonishment, we came upon Maxwell-Farquharson again.

It was now raining a steady downpour, but he stood at the

street corner philosophically indifferent, chatting to a tall policeman.

'Ah ! here you are. The fact is, the night is young, for me, and I am not inclined to turn in yet. Shall we walk together as far as my club ?'

We were both very pleased to have his company, and said so. He and the policeman wished one another good-night, and we faced the hill together, while he gave us a description of his club, which bore the roystering name of The Nighthawks.

It seemed that, some few years before, he and a few of his friends found, in the course of time and by dint of coming across one another in the small hours, that they had a taste in common. This, one hesitates to proclaim it of such respectable citizens, was nothing less than a craze to be up and doing when their less energetic neighbours were in bed and asleep. If any of them ever had wild oats, they had been sown long ago, and this fancy of theirs was far more likely to result from habits of late hard work far into the night, than from anything less praiseworthy. But, whatever the cause, there was the habit, and they determined to cultivate it in company. They rented a small and unpretending flat, they established as housekeeper a night-porter, who was more accustomed to sleep by day than by night, they ordered in a reasonable quantity of whisky and of mineral waters, and they formed a club.

Also they found the longest clay pipes anyone had ever seen, and decorated their walls with them, and with nothing else. They arranged that the club should be open at 9.30 P.M. and should close when no member should want to stay any longer. Also that, since by 9.30 P.M. the day's news had either been read or was not worth reading, there should be no newspapers for the Nighthawks, or, indeed, any other kind of literature. They were to depend on one another for improvement and entertainment, and I may tell you, from my own later personal experience, that they have a good deal to depend on.

By the time Maxwell-Farquharson had so far sketched the Nighthawks for our amusement, we had reached the door. He hospitably pressed us to go up with him, but we refused. It might seem early for the Nighthawks, but it was after midnight and quite late enough for us, after the events of the last twenty-four hours. I asked him to repeat the invitation some other

evening, if he would, and he promised to do so, and, looking fresh enough for an all-night sitting, ran up the stair to his sleep-scorning fellows.

As for us we plodded onward again, and had the flooded street almost to ourselves. Tramcars had stopped, public-houses and theatres had closed more than an hour ago, and, except for ourselves, the policemen, and the ever-wakeful Nighthawks, all the world seemed asleep. Not a light was to be seen, except from the street lamps, until we were in sight of the Rookery, and then Clegg pointed out that a room was lit up.

'Not your room, is it?'

'Yes,' I said. 'Whose else should it be?'

'Reid's, I thought; but I couldn't be sure at this distance.'

'Reid's is below and dark. He's in bed by this time, unless he's still hugging that blessed fiddle. I only hope he'll wake in a more cheerful frame of mind than he seemed to be in to-night. Sleepy, old man?'

'Yes,' Clegg said, and we went up the stair to my room. No sooner did I shut the door, however, and, with a yawn, throw off my coat, than he grew restless. He moved up and down the room, and, pressing his face against the glass, peered out of the window, chatting brightly enough about one thing and another all the time.

'I think the Tweedies the jolliest folk I ever met, don't you? Makes a fellow feel bound to be decent when he has friends like them, doesn't it? Isn't Tweedie good fun? Did you see how he managed that old party next him at dinner?'

'Did you notice Reay-Carter, too?' I asked him.

'Rather! "I—ah—don't cycle"—the pompous fool! His high collars always give me the notion of a sort of defence—to keep off vulgar folk, don't you know! Tweedie took the stiffening out of him though, didn't he! I never heard the man laugh before.'

'Isn't Mrs. Tweedie a good soul too?' I said. 'Did you see how she looked after Reid, and tried to make him cheer up?'

'Reid's a damned fool,' said Clegg pettishly. 'I'd like to break his fiddle and his silly neck too! What the devil does he go spoiling the fun for, with his long face, and his infernal screeching? I tell you it made that nightmare of mine grin like——'

'Stop that,' I said sharply.

‘What for?’

‘Only because it’s no use raking up these things just before going to bed, that’s all, old man.’

‘Yes; that’s all right. But I’m not going to bed yet, are you? I’m just waking up. Gad! I think I’ll join the Night-hawks! Jolly old boys they must be, mustn’t they? I s’pose they’re hard at it now, with their churchwardens and their whisky. Hope they don’t take too much, that’s all. I say, I’m hungry.’

‘Hungry, man! Why, it’s near one!’

‘I don’t care if it’s near a hundred and one. The proper time to eat is when we’re hungry. Come downstairs and see what we can find.’

‘I can tell you that easily enough’—I yawned—‘a couple of half loaves, a little butter, if we’re in luck, and a glass of beer, if we want it, from the barrel.’

‘Jolly good grub too! What more do you want? You’re a what-you-may call-it, Tree. A sybarite, an epicure. You’ll have a French cook and a cellar as soon as you can afford it, and think yourself an anchorite all the time. Come on, man.’

I had thrown myself on my bed in my shirt-sleeves, and was listening more to the steady stream of rain than to him, but I rose, grumbling a little, and, slipping on my blazer, went down with him.

We hunted over the long tables, and found things much as I had prophesied; but Clegg was quite satisfied. He drew a couple of glasses of beer from the barrel, so that I might keep him company, and sat down to eat ravenously, talking as hard as ever.

‘That chap Maxwell-Farquharson looks at a man as if he expected to see the wheels go round. Let’s get him up some night and make him talk. ’Twould cost a fortune in whisky, don’t you think, if he felt like holding his tongue?’

‘You’d better look sharp and ask him, then,’ I said. ‘He goes off in a few days, I believe.’

‘That’s all right. I’m going to meet him at Caird’s in a day or two. Why didn’t you tell me Caird was doing Miss Verney’s portrait?’

‘He isn’t,’ I retorted. ‘She’s only sitting as a sort of model; besides, you never mention her name to me.’

‘Ah, well! Sometimes I believe I forget her,’ he said with such absurd frankness that I burst out laughing.

'You needn't laugh,' he went on. 'I know you wouldn't say so if you were me, but you're different. It's true, anyway. When I'm near her, though, I think there's no one else worth a straw. So there! Now you know.' And he got up and began to stroll up and down the long room, whistling defiantly.

'Such things as I've thought of her too! In my bad times, you know. I ought to be kicked!'

'Well, I'm not going to do it to-night,' I said, stretching myself. 'Let's get to bed, for goodness' sake. It's half-past one.'

'That's about the time most folk die, isn't it?' he went on with startling irrelevancy. 'I wonder how many are dying now, Tree? Listen!' he held up a finger to hush me, though he was talking, not I, and pointed to the great eight-day clock that stood against the wall. Its solemn monotonous ticking echoed through the big room, while, under it all, one heard the drip, drip outside.

'Only think,' he went on, 'someone dying somewhere all the time! Fancy passing through the rain on a night like this! Well, I feel alive enough, anyway.'

He stopped in his restless tramp, and, coming back to the table, filled his glass again and lifted it.

'Here's to them!'

He set it to his lips and drank, and, even while he did so, to the ticking pendulum and the rush of the rain was added another sound.

It crept in a slow, soft, monotonous whisper, that shivered through the room and died away, only to rise again and fall as Clegg put down his glass.

'What's that?' he asked. 'Did you hear anything?'

'Hush!' I said. 'I can't be sure what it is?'

We listened, but a mouse gnawing in the wall was the only new sound. Then, just as I was going to say that there was nothing, it began again.

Reid's violin!

It rose once more, piercing the silence like a knife, while we looked at one another, and, as it did so, I saw Clegg's eyes rove from mine, and fixing on something behind me follow it round the room.

'I can't stand it, Tree,' he muttered. 'He must stop that,' and he ran up the stair,

The sound ended before he was half way, but I heard him dashing on, and into the room, while his voice was raised in angry expostulation even before he opened the door.

I had sat half yawning, half shivering when the sound began, and even when Clegg moved I was slow to follow, I was so tired. But at the sound of his voice I was seized with a sudden dread, and rose hurriedly to join them.

As I did so there was a dull thud on the floor above, and when I reached the room it was to find Reid lying face downwards, while Clegg knelt beside him.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE CRUCIFORM MARK

I HAVE not a very clear recollection of what took place during the next few seconds, but I believe that I pushed Clegg roughly aside, telling him to get out of my way and turn on the light ; for Reid, as usual, had been playing in the dark, and now, as he lay huddled on the floor, I could scarcely see anything.

Clegg did as he was told without a word, and even before there was light my fingers were running over what lay before me, feeling that everything was loose at the throat, searching for the imperceptible pulse at the wrist, and for the absent heart-beat.

My foot kicked in the darkness against the violin, and it gave out a sharp complaining note, which startled me, but I was too busy to do more than push it a little further away. Almost before the light came I called for my hypodermic syringe and the whisky, but when Clegg had fetched it from my room I hesitated, moistening the lips only, and listening vainly with my stethoscope. There was a lump rising on the forehead. If this ghastly heap which lay before me had been silenced by a sudden blow, and if there was internal bleeding and brain pressure, I must be careful how I excited the heart to pump more blood out of the torn vessels—but yet the heart must be made to act. It was only a choice of evils.

I remembered afterwards that, all the time, I had been saying, ‘What have you done? Oh, what have you done?’ but that was involuntary, and my fingers never stopped in their work.

All this only took a few seconds, and whatever should be done must be done quickly.

'How was this, Clegg? Tell me at once, for Heaven's sake, that I may know what I can do!'

'How was this?' He echoed my words, staring down at the heap in a helpless sort of way.

'Quick, man! It's now or never.'

'How should I know? He slipped off his chair as I came in.'

'You swear you know nothing? Quick, I say!'

He looked at the body and then at me as if dazed, and hesitated.

'I never touched him,' he said, 'if that's what you mean.'

'What else should I mean? Fill the syringe with whisky and give it me, then.'

I injected a full dose of whisky, having nothing else so readily to hand; I raised his feet and set Clegg rubbing them, while I dashed water into his face and examined his mouth. It was of no use. The raised hand dropped heavily when I loosed it, the head hung loosely when I raised it, and the face grew grey and solemnly calm as we watched.

The little lines of nervousness and irritation smoothed out, and we stood before death.

'Help me to lift him on to his bed,' I said. 'There's no other qualified man in the place, is there?'

'Yes, there's Muir.'

'What's he doing here?'

'His people are away, and he's come for a month. I saw him to-night going in to dinner when we came up to dress for the Tweedies.'

'What room is he in?'

'Top flat at the back.'

'Fetch him quietly, will you? It's no use scaring the house.'

I was working all the time, but without any hope of doing good, and I continued to try everything I could think of to bring back life, while Clegg was away—but with no result.

It was not long before he came back, bringing Muir with him. Muir stooped over the bed and lifted the eyelid; borrowed my stethoscope and listened to the heart; raised the hand and watched it fall, limp and resistless.

'Too late,' he said. 'Why wasn't I called before?'

I stared at him before replying.

'We were both of us busy. I couldn't spare Clegg until I had done all I could.'

He shrugged his shoulders with a superior air.

'What did you do?'

'Gave him a hypodermic of whisky, with friction, and so on.'

'Why not ether?'

'I had none handy. I don't think it would have made any difference.'

'I do, and I had plenty. It's much more readily diffusible. You can imagine the cause of death, of course?'

I looked at Clegg, but he was bending over the body staring at it intently, and said nothing.

'I can only guess at it,' I said. 'I couldn't certify.'

'The man had a weak heart; of course you know that?'

'I have thought so,' I said.

'I know it, for I got him to let me auscultate when I called here one day. Now look here. Weak heart, plus influenza last spring, and—what was he doing to-night?'

'He dined out with us,' I said, 'down at Heriot Row.'

'Ah! drinking heavily?'

I looked down on the quiet face before me, with a feeling of aversion from the matter-of-fact, practical questioner.

'No,' I said.

'Well, a good dinner anyway; and then he comes up the hill, and gives the heart more work than it can stand. I told him to be careful.'

'You're sure it's heart failure, then?'

'Of course! What else could it be? Tell me that!'

I shook my head.

'It seems very likely.'

'You heard him fall, didn't you, and ran up?'

'Yes.'

Muir turned to Clegg.

'And you saw him fall, didn't you?'

Clegg nodded his head.

'Well, that settles it. You don't suppose he was murdered, do you?'

He asked this sarcastically, scarcely knowing Reid, and not feeling it therefore as we did.

He did not wait for any answer to his last question, but went on:



'I'm quite ready to certify, if you like, though you saw him first. I had examined him, you know, and I registered to-day.'

'I've not registered,' I said ; 'so, for that matter, I couldn't certify even if I wanted to.'

Death certificates are necessary things, but I had signed none, and didn't care to discuss, first, that of a man who had been an intimate acquaintance, though perhaps not a friend.

We stood and looked at one another, wondering what to do next. I asked Muir, and his suggestion that we should lock the door and go back to bed didn't satisfy me.

'It's not far to the police-station, anyhow,' I said, 'and we can't do any harm by telling them. It might be simpler in the end.'

'Very well'—Muir nodded his head—'you'd better go.'

'Not at all. If you're going to certify, and if you've expected this, you're the one to go. If you and Clegg go together, I'll stay here until you come back.'

My argument was quite good enough to need consideration, and Muir could see no way out of it. I knew that he didn't want Clegg, and that Clegg didn't want to go, but I couldn't leave Clegg there, and it was much better that he, as well as Muir, should give information.

Besides, as a matter of fact, I wanted to be in the room alone ; so Muir went grumbling away to his room to dress, for he had come down in his dressing-gown, and left us alone with the body.

Directly he left the room Clegg turned away from the bed and went to the window. There he leant against the sill and stayed without saying anything, while I, standing by the body, twice tried to speak, and twice failed. Then I drew up a chair by the bedside and sat there, until Muir came back and told us he was ready, at which Clegg moved from the window and left the room with him, making no remark, not even looking my way before going.

I sat for some minutes after they left, doing nothing. I can scarcely say even that I was thinking. I was very tired, and my brain seemed to be numb, almost stupefied. I found myself, in a dull sort of way, going over little details of the capping, and calling up Reay-Carter's face at the Tweedies' as he leant against the balustrade to laugh, and it all seemed ages ago. Presently, however, I recollected myself. Muir and

Clegg after all might fail to satisfy the police, and someone might come back with them almost at once, before I could do what I wanted.

I roused myself with a great deal of difficulty, and, going to the table, poured out some whisky and drank it off at a gulp. As I put down the tumbler, I saw that a letter lay there, sealed and directed.

I picked it up and looked at it. It was directed to Miss Verney, and the address was at Liberton, which is now, with the city's growth, almost becoming a suburb on the south side. 'Private' was written on the top left-hand corner, and it was sealed with an old-fashioned heavy seal, which even now I could see on Reid's watch-chain.

I stood and looked at this, trying how far it would help me to decide what had been haunting my mind against my will for the last hour. How had Reid died? Was Muir's common-sense explanation enough, or did Clegg know more of it than he said. I remembered our struggle in the Common Room, and how little Clegg had been like his old self lately. Then, again, here was a sealed letter. Would that help one, if one could read it? I remembered Reid's dull silence and his wild playing. It seemed to me that suicide was not absolutely impossible. I stood and weighed the letter in my hand, and almost, so far was I carried away by my intense interest, opened it to see what help, if any, it could give me. But this temptation only lasted an instant, after which I took a more matter-of-fact view of things.

A man, believed to be in a serious state of ill-health, had died suddenly. He had been said by Clegg, whom I never found anything but absolutely truthful, to have slipped from his chair and died without any visible cause. He had been seen by me within a few seconds after, and I had no reasonable ground for suspicion. As for suicide, any man may die, many men do, with freshly written letters on their table, and the man who wears a seal often uses it unnecessarily. A large number of suicides hint at their intention beforehand, or even write letters exonerating others from all blame. If Muir had warned Reid of his condition in as blunt a way as he often spoke, it was quite possible that this had been constantly on Reid's mind, and had hastened matters very much. Even the letter which I still held might have been written with reference to this continual risk. I had heard, from those of the men who

had stayed in town, several laughing references to Reid's lady friend, of whom the others did not even know the name. This letter might easily give some satisfactory clue, but I had no need to open it. Nor would I post it. I would call and let Miss Verney know, as gently as I could, that Reid had died, and if there was anything in the letter that would be useful to know, no doubt she would tell me.

I slipped the letter into my pocket, and turned again toward the bed, but as I did so there was the banging of a door below, and the sound of feet upon the stair. The door must have been caught as it was opened, by the wind which whistled up the stair, bringing with it the sound of coming feet. I heard no voice, as I stopped to listen, halfway toward the bed. The silence of the house, and the wish not to rouse the sleepers, must have hushed any talking, and the steady tramp of the coming feet sounded strangely solemn and mysterious along the stairs and passages.

Before they reached the bedroom door I knew that three, not two, were coming, and, going quietly back to the bedside, sat down to wait. Presently the door opened, and, as I had expected, after Muir and Clegg had come in, a third stood in the doorway. It was a thin-faced, quiet, grey-bearded inspector whom I had often seen before, though I did not know his name, and I nodded to him as I rose from my chair.

It was Muir who spoke.

'The police medical officer was not there, and the inspector thought that if he came up he could report better.'

The inspector stepped forward quietly, and looked down at the face as the rest of us had done. He laid his finger on the forehead at once.

'How do you account for this, gentlemen?'

'He fell forward with his head on the table, and then slipped to the floor.'

It was Clegg who spoke, and I said nothing.

The inspector looked at the violin.

'He was playing, you say?'

'He had been. He was holding the violin, but he had stopped playing before I came in.'

'What did you come for, sir?'

'I came to tell him to stop, but he fell before I spoke to him.'

Clegg spoke quite clearly and without hesitation. It was

quite natural after all, I thought, that he should have spoken with less clearness and readiness at first. It had startled him, as it had me.

The inspector turned to Muir.

‘You say you had attended him, sir?’

‘Yes,’ said Muir promptly, and after all with absolute truth. He told me afterwards that he had suggested a prescription, though there is no reason to suppose Reid ever took it.

‘Our doctor may come up, or may ask you to step down to-morrow morning,’ the man said, nodding at Muir. ‘Will you tell his friends?’

We promised to get what information we could about his family, and then to let them know at once.

‘The door had better be locked,’ he went on. ‘Which of you gentlemen will keep the key?’

I was going to say that I would, but, while I hesitated, Muir settled it.

‘You had better do so yourself, hadn’t you, if there’s any possibility of further inquiry?’

This seemed what the inspector wanted to get without having to ask for it.

‘It’s the best way, may be,’ he said, ‘and you, gentlemen, have no more responsibility. One of our men shall come up at nine to let you know if there’s any formality to go through. No one will be wanting the key before that.’

So we gently straightened out the body, and, covering its face, left the room, the inspector locking the door after him and wishing us good-night.

Muir also went to his room, and Clegg came to mine, but there was no talk between us. He wished me good-night, and turning his face away lay silent, until I thought by his slow, regular breathing that he was asleep.

Then I spoke softly twice, but getting no reply I slipped quietly from my bed and went to my door. I must face the downstairs room and its inmate once more before I could sleep, and I knew quite well that the locked door would not hinder me.

Months ago Reid had been locked in by some silly fellow who, to complete the performance, walked off with the key, and I had let him out with mine just as he was proceeding to smash the door.

I took the key from my lock, therefore, and went quietly

down in my stockings feet. In another half-hour the dawn would come, and the risk would be greater, but oh, how tired I was, and how dull ! I unlocked the door softly, and stepped in. At first I thought of locking it again on the inside, but why should I ? If anyone happened to come and the door were open, they could not say anything. I stepped quickly toward the bed, and, raising the covering, examined the neck. There was a small red cruciform mark, which I had only partially seen before when we examined him.

I locked the door and went back quietly to my room. Once, as I turned a corner, a shadow seemed moving before me, but I saw it no more. When I reached my room Clegg was as soundly asleep as ever, and I was too tired to think or act in any way. The whole house was quiet, and I slept at once.

## CHAPTER XXX

### CAVE CANEM

THE next two or three days were very miserable. After a little inquiry by the authorities, Muir's certificate was not questioned further, and Reid's father, a quaint, slow-speaking farmer from the North, came down the next night and took the body away to be buried among the quiet hills, where I saw the tombstone when I was walking through that part of the country the following summer. So, in a short time, his sudden death ceased to be talked about, or even thought of, except by Clegg and myself.

He and I never spoke of it but once. Then, he seeming quite himself again, except that he had never shown any of his old fun, I spoke plainly.

'Clegg, I want to talk of Reid's death for a minute, and then drop the matter once for all.'

He turned unwilling eyes on me from his favourite corner of my sofa in the window, where lately he had been more than ever.

'Well ?'

'You know you weren't so cool as usual at that time. Now you've had time to think it over, are you quite sure you didn't touch him ?'

'You asked me that at the time, didn't you ?'

'Yes.'

'What did I say?'

'That you didn't, but——'

'You think I'm a liar, then?'

'If you remember it so well, you'll remember that you didn't hurry to say anything,' I said stiffly.

'That's true, I own that.'

He sat looking at me for a while, and then spoke more gently.

'Tree! I'm all right again now, and I still stick to it that I never touched him, or hurt him in any way. Won't you believe me?'

'Of course I will,' I said. 'I wish to goodness I had spoken of it again sooner. I've had a miserable three days, I can tell you.'

So we shook hands on that, and, although Clegg hadn't got back his old spirits, he was in every other way all right, and I was no longer afraid to leave him. That afternoon, therefore, I would call and deliver Reid's letter to Miss Verney. I had not done so before because Reid's affairs had taken up some of my time, and also until Clegg seemed safe I wouldn't leave him for Miss Verney or anyone else. She had showed no sign, I thought, of being particularly sensitive, and privately I did not imagine that she would be dangerously shocked, even if by chance she learned of Reid's death before I saw her.

Clegg being better, however, I set out for Liberton after lunch, without telling him where I was going, and being very glad to stretch my legs, walked all the way, and got there about half-past three.

I could not see the house from the road, but its name on the high garden door showed me that I was right.

The double doors were closed, but a small one at the side gave way to my push, and I walked up the little drive without asking any questions at the porter's lodge which I passed. Presently, however, I came across an unexpected difficulty. Before I could see the house, I heard a deep baying, and a large mastiff came lumbering down to meet me. What with high walls, a porter's lodge and her dog, I thought Miss Verney guarded herself quite sufficiently, and the dog, as he came near, began to look unpleasant.

Now, I am not a very strong man or a very plucky one; but what could I do? I had no stick, and the dog was heavier and faster than I. It was of no use to think of bolting, and,

besides, I had come to see Miss Verney, so I stuck my hands in my pockets and strolled on, trying to look, in case anyone saw me, a great deal more comfortable than I felt.

'Come to heel, you beggar,' I shouted to the brute, and he, being apparently accustomed to obey orders given in a decided way, came to heel, and followed me to the door, keeping up a thunderstorm of growls, however, as we went, and digging his nose now and then against the small of my back in a way that kept me perpetually wondering what would happen next. However, I reached the door safely and rang the bell, though the sound of it seemed to make the dog more irritated than ever, and I was just wondering how much longer I could keep him within bounds, when the door opened and a singular figure stood before me.

She was a tall, elderly woman, big-boned and brawny, with hair that had I suppose once been yellow, but now was sandy, though still very thick. Her face was strong, square and resolute, and I liked it, though, as she towered some inches above me, she looked anything but friendly.

The first thing she did was enough to try my tired nerves badly. She threw up her hands and fairly shrieked :

'Mon ! Div ye no' see the dog ?'

'Yes. Is Miss Verney at home ?'

'Guidness guide us, he'll be the death o' ye !'

'I dare say he will if you excite him much more. Lie down, sir, will you ?' for the dog evidently looked on me as his lawful prey, and began to make preparations for war. He dropped for the moment, however, at my sharply spoken order, and I took care to keep my eyes steadily on him while I talked.

'Is Miss Verney at home ?' I asked again.

'Maybe, maybe no'.'

'Kindly find out.'

My sentences were short, and perhaps peremptory, for I was watching the dog all the time, and he watched me.

'I'm thinkin' she'll no' see ye.'

'You can ask, anyway.—Lie still, you brute !—Tell her Dr. Tregenna has a message for her. I can't look for a card because of her animal here.'

'Bide a wee then, Doctor, and I'll tell ye.'

She turned unwillingly to go, but I stopped her.

'How much of me do you think there'll be left to tell, if you leave me with this beast here ? Do you think I look like a thief ?'

'Eh, but ye're haudin' him doun gran' noo ! 'Tisna' a' can do it !'

'I dare say ; but I'm getting sick of staring at his ugly face,' I said. 'Take him inside, or take me.'

She thought the first the safer, evidently, and spoke to him : 'Hey, Satan ! come awa', ben,' and the dog rose and moved in, giving a warning growl as he passed me.

'“A rose by any other name,”' I muttered. 'Why, what can you expect from a dog with a name like that ?'

'It's no' mine,' was her answer, and she shut the door, with Satan on the one side and me on the other, so that I could breathe, freed, for the moment at least, from the powers of darkness.

I stood wondering whether the postman ever passed the door at the lodge, and why I had not used a penny stamp, and I don't know that any more brilliant speculation passed through my mind until one of the guardians of the place came back.

'Satan,' I was glad to see, had gone, presumably to his own place, and when the woman came back and spoke, which she did not quite so ungraciously, she was alone.

'Miss Maisie'll be pleased to see ye.'

I followed her in silence, speculating on Maisie, which name I had never read before except in the Waverley Novels.

Proud Maisie is in the wood  
Walking so early.

I wondered if it was appropriate, and was wondering still when I was shown into the little sitting-room, where Miss Verney lay on the couch.

She stretched out a hand to me, and told the woman to put a chair near her.

'Well, Dr. Tregenna, from what Meg tells me you're a rash man.'

'Are you dangerous ?' I asked, taking her hand.

'Maybe, maybe no', as Meg says, 'but Satan is most decidedly.'

'So I have always heard,' I said flippantly, and then asked if she had been ill, for she continued to lie back on the couch, holding a magazine, and I noticed that she had on some sort of wrap or dressing-gown.

'Not ill,' she said, 'but not lively enough to dress for callers. But one may receive a medical man *en déshabille*,



mayn't one? My few acquaintances who have met Satan don't take me by storm. They make their inquiries at the lodge first.'

'They are wise, I expect. I shouldn't have ventured but that I have a message for you.'

'So Meg told me. What is it?'

'You haven't been in town lately?'

'Not for a week or more. What are you looking so grave about? Is it a challenge? They're about the only things that don't come by post, I believe.'

I shook my head.

'It's a letter from one of our men.'

'Mr. Clegg!'—she sat up a little and stretched out her hand.

'No, Reid.'

'Mr. Reid! I scarcely know him.' She looked at me curiously, still stretching out her hand for the letter.

'Then it will shock you the less to hear that he is dead.'

'Dead! Poor fellow, what did he die of?'

She looked no more than politely concerned as I handed her the letter, feeling that my clumsy attempts to lessen the shock had not been at all necessary.

'I don't know what he died of,' I said. 'They said heart disease.'

She sat up with the letter in her hand, evidently expecting me to say good-bye, but I persisted:

'Do you mind opening that letter before I go? He wrote it the night he died, and there may be something for me to hear.'

She looked at me impatiently, but opened it and read. I watched her face anxiously, but it showed nothing except, perhaps, contempt.

'There's nothing for you to hear,' she said at the end, 'except that I should say your friend was mad. Did you ever think so?'

'He was always very excitable and eccentric,' I said. 'He seemed more so just lately. But what I particularly want to know is whether he speaks of expecting death.'

Miss Verney turned the letter over, and looked through it again.

'He says, with reference to something else, which will not be interesting to you, "expecting death as I do"—that is all he says of it.'

I gave a sigh of relief.

'The man who certified was right, then,' I said, and got up to go, but Miss Verney stopped me.

'Wait until I've had Satan chained,' she said. 'You've run risk enough coming in. He's apt to speed the parting guest rather quickly if he sees him. Besides, you get interesting on acquaintance. What did you expect to hear in this letter?'

'There were possible complications,' I said, 'which you wouldn't understand without a medical training.'

This may not have been strictly true, but I came to get, not to give, information.

'I dare say I've had training enough,' she said carelessly. 'Medical men never think a woman can understand anything; but it doesn't matter.'

'I didn't know you cared for study at all,' I said rather bluntly, 'and least of all in medicine. When did you work at it?'

'Four years ago I was in Boston, and took it up for a few months because a travelling acquaintance was doing so. Then I heard lectures on the Continent later, from Virchow and Charcot and Pasteur.'

'Virchow admits no women,' I said; but she only laughed, flushing a little.

'I had forgotten. I made a good-looking young fellow, I believe. I was mad on nursing too, for six months.'

'What made you drop it?'

'I wasn't strong enough. I got too excited over it, and wore myself out. I've never got excited over anything since. I'm content to be a butterfly now. But I'm inhospitable! You'll stay for a cup of tea, won't you? I pride myself on my tea and my china.'

I rang the bell for her, having no particular reason for hurry, and the tea was brought in.

Suddenly an idea seemed to strike Miss Verney, and she turned to the woman.

'Meg, bring in Satan; I'm going to make him friends with the Doctor.'

Meg went away, silently, being apparently no believer in unnecessary words, and presently we heard the dog coming along the passage. Miss Verney lay watching me silently, and I, having, it seemed, a reputation to keep up, took care to sip the tea she had just given me, with great deliberation and, I hope,

an air of enjoyment. The dog began to snarl directly he came in, but I did not look at him. Miss Verney had sent for him, and she was responsible for my skin, not I. So I raised my voice a little to be heard above his noise, and praised the tea, while she lay back and smiled.

I noticed, however, that she was looking behind me at the dog all the time, and when she suddenly called sharply to him, and made him lie down by the couch, I felt it much easier to enjoy the tea. Then she proceeded to make us better acquainted. She scolded him every time he growled, until in disgust he stopped altogether. Then she talked to him gravely of my imaginary virtues, and so mischievous was she, that by dint of carefully praising, in an exaggerated way, several qualities which neither she nor anyone else ever dreamt of my having, she managed not to give me any satisfaction when she spoke of virtues possibly within my reach. To all this the dog seemed to listen gravely, after which she begged me to go through the formality of shaking hands with her for his special edification. Then he was told to offer me his paw, which he did in a way that made me glad I had not felt the weight of it on my shoulder.

After that a big piece of cake from me, that went at a gulp down a mouth like a cavern, concluded the formalities, and his head was laid upon my knee in a way that Miss Verney told me was a proof of friendship.

'This will make you safe when you come out to visit me again,' she said, and I replied that I was glad to hear it, little thinking when that would be. Then she fell to praising Meg, and told me that she was her old nurse—the only friend left in the world, she said; and when I suggested the names of half a dozen acquaintances, she merely lay quiet and looked at me through half-shut eyes with a sarcastic smile, until I was almost tempted to ask her leave to add my own name to the list, but said nothing of it, remembering that she had once spoken of our becoming friends, and that I had in no way encouraged the notion. So I got up presently and came away, feeling that she was a more interesting and sensible woman than I had supposed, but not knowing why I had changed my mind about her. As for poor Reid, I had very little doubt that I knew what was in that letter. The poor fellow had been fascinated, like many others, and had wished her to know it. He had thought a great deal more about her than she could suppose, and she had

not thought of him at all. If she was hardened by experience, at least she had the merit of making no pretence to me. She had thought him a madman and said so, and would probably think no more of that than of other conquests that I did not doubt she had made. This went through my mind as I passed down the drive, with the dog again at my heels, but in a very different capacity.

He followed me in a friendly way to the lodge, and saw me out, with a wave of the tail that promised I should be threatened no more if I came back.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### A WEARINESS TO THE FLESH

I NOW set my mind upon forgetting, as quickly as possible, the troubles of the last month. Clegg was well, and was going to remain well, I hoped, in spite of his present unaccustomed soberness of manner. Reid had died from natural causes, no doubt, and it was of no use devising ingenious but false theories concerning him. Since I had long ago proved for myself what others told me, that the best way to forget one thing is to plunge into another, I turned my attention to what happened to be going on at the time.

This was a series of classes held just then in Edinburgh, and kept going in a very remarkable and ingenious fashion.

Grosvenor, with his usual taste for paradox, held to the theory that holidays were the time when everyone was best able and most anxious to work. This demand must be supplied, which justified the importuning of lecturers, eminent and otherwise, to take their holidays in Edinburgh, and spend them in lecturing, with or without pecuniary profit to themselves. For this was the summer holiday-time, and in holidays one does not work ; therefore to lecture in the summer holiday-time was not to work. Besides, were there not scores of folk, nay hundreds, thirsting for knowledge, and could one be so hard-hearted as to deny them ever so little of one's own abundant stores ?

So sundry easy-tempered souls promised to lecture, and then it became necessary to find an audience. The lectures, as a rule, were caviare to the multitude, and come they would

not, in spite of advertisement. Here and there a hyper-conscientious soul came along, but the average young man and woman turned up their noses at these attempts to sell them what they didn't want, and tramping off to hillside and seaside, unconsciously did the best thing possible towards accumulating health for the next twelve months. Then an audience became problematical, and free tickets being issued to certain sections of the community, it was interesting to discover how few people preferred lectures to fresh air. However, a hundred or so turned up of misguided souls who lost their holiday, and of people who, making life one long holiday, found a pretence at study amusing, and the whole scheme must have been thought a success, since a great educationist, who also looked very much overworked, was prevailed upon to come and congratulate everybody in a polite and well-delivered speech.

There were very few of my acquaintances in any way connected with this eager pursuit of knowledge. Either they knew things already, or they didn't want to know them, and nearly all went out of town. Miss Verney, who for some unknown reason did not go away that month, used to come in sometimes, and ask teasing questions in a way that made some of the younger lecturers fly from her. Satan sometimes came too, and created a pleasing diversion in a very dull lecture one day by lifting up his head and howling the lecturer down.

I taxed Miss Verney afterwards with prompting him, and never was convinced that she did not.

Clegg was not one of these workers. He went home for the time, and so I was free to do what I liked and go where I would, and I was ready to enjoy most things in a quiet way after my past worry.

I was particularly interested in watching Grosvenor and Miss Verney. At the beginning of the month he had certainly led me to understand that she had fairly enrolled herself in his little army of female enthusiasts, and whatever his failings were, I had never heard him boast rashly. But now she refused to treat him seriously, refused at first even to come to his lectures, and on being pressed to do so until it was too much trouble to refuse any longer, came, and yawned elaborately all through, in a way that he seemed to find excessively disconcerting.

He was full of ideas, which tumbled and jolted out in one never-ceasing stream, turbid, if one may push the figure of speech further, and with a vast amount of froth on the top.

Froth, as one knows, looks very pretty in certain lights. Here and there a paradox or an epigram was jerked in, not always *à propos* of the supposed subject, which, indeed, as a rule, was avoided, and then the female worshippers turned to one another with appreciative smiles; but Miss Verney at such times would be looking out of the window or making a caricature. At first Grosvenor had turned to her boldly when making what he thought a distinct hit, and it was pathetic to notice his confusion when he saw that no impression was made. Later on he even grew nervous under her cold grey eyes, and would go away and mutter his good things into the blackboard, with his back turned to the eager but unsatisfied audience. One day the matter even became serious, for, in the middle of a long and involved sentence, containing a great deal but not expressing it, since it was incomprehensible, he turned unguardedly to look at his audience for sympathy, and happened to catch Miss Verney's eyes fixed on him with more interest than usual. He floundered on a moment, stopped, started again, stammered through one or two words more, and then was silent altogether, while we sat and watched him. Finally he went from the lecture theatre, leaving his papers strewn on the table, and a half-finished diagram on the blackboard, while a hum of surprise rose from the benches, and Miss Verney sat quietly smiling to herself. One of his colleagues followed Grosvenor out of the room, and presently came back to say that he had been seized with a sudden attack of faintness, and had been advised to lecture no more that day.

The class broke up, and I went to his retiring-room for the purpose of seeing if any help was needed, but when I went in there was very little trace of faintness about Grosvenor. He was raving up and down the little room, very red in the face, and swearing profusely, for the first time within my knowledge. Seeing that I was not needed, I turned and slipped quietly out again, but he caught sight of me and called me back.

The room was small, and his enormous bulk raging round the little table left no space practically for anyone else.

He saw, I suppose, my look of apprehension. I am a small man, and was wondering what would be the result of a collision. It almost looked as if the greater might absorb the less, but he beckoned me in, and threw himself on the sofa.

'I am sorry you are ill,' I said. 'Can I do anything for you?'

'Yes, Tregenna—that is, no ! I shall get over it presently.'

'We're sorry to hear that you got faint.'

Grosvenor's only reply was a groan, that heaved his chest until I watched for his buttons to fly off.

We were silent awhile, after which he proclaimed himself better, and began to talk, apparently with some irrelevance.

'Ingratitude is a fearful blow, Tregenna.'

'What, another ?' I asked sympathetically, for those who were at all intimate with his affairs knew that Grosvenor suffered continually from ingratitude among those whom he considered bound to him.

'Yes, Tregenna, but I make no complaint.'

'That is best, no doubt,' I allowed.

'I saw you watching. You noticed what happened ?'

'You grew faint,' I said innocently, 'and could not follow out your idea.'

He eyed me in silence, but at last nodded his head.

'Yes, I could not follow my idea,' and, finding that he seemed to have forgotten me, I came quietly away.

For some days after that, Miss Verney never made an appearance at Grosvenor's lectures. Whether he had taken any steps to prevent her doing so I never knew. For the first few mornings after his collapse I noticed that, as he came in, he furtively eyed the place where she had been accustomed to sit, and, once he had begun, was more than usually disturbed if any late comer opened the door. Later still a time came when Miss Verney made her appearance again. I saw her wait about, a little before the lecture hour, and follow the Professor to his retiring-room, with rather the air of a child that expected a whipping. What she said he did not tell me, but she attended his lectures again, and Grosvenor that day was particularly eloquent upon the question of woman's work in the world, and the help that she was able to give an earnest worker by sympathetic co-operation. He also took an opportunity of mentioning casually to me that she was a noble soul, and only needed a guiding hand, which hand, I had reason to believe, he thought he was the person to supply.

I saw other familiar faces, too, at these lectures. Muir turned up one morning, to see what we were playing at, as he expressed it, and although he jeered openly, he came again. It was interesting to me, as I sat well at the back, to notice that he took up a position where Miss Verney's handsome face

could be seen to advantage. He paid more attention to that than to any lecturer, and I was amused, until one morning Elsie Reid came, though not with him, and sitting near me, and behind them both, watched Muir, who kept his eyes on Miss Verney, while she listened soberly to Grosvenor, and, I think, did not see Muir at all.

After the appearance of Elsie Reid, I, remembering her engagement, ceased to be amused at the tangle of things in general, and watched it all going on under my eyes, with a sort of feeling that soon there was likely to be a climax, in which someone, probably the weakest, would suffer badly. So things drifted on, and people developed around me. As I watched Miss Verney, she began now and then to show traces of that side of her character which had been praised to me. Whether Grosvenor's eloquence and energy were acting upon her I could not tell, but certainly there were changes. Her face softened and became dreamy. She often sat in the lecture-room with an absent look, as if she were thinking pleasant thoughts, from which, if stirred by any sentence in the lecture, she turned to listen with a look of enthusiasm which I, in my carping mood, often thought was not merited by what she heard.

Muir's face grew harder and his manner more sarcastic as the days passed by. In a day or two he found out that Elsie Reid was attending, since she met him one day in the lobby when something had prevented him from getting away as quickly as usual after Miss Verney.

Her name was not spoken by either of them, but I heard him jeeringly ask the girl when she had begun to take an interest in science, at which she flushed up and said that it was when he began to find Professor Grosvenor worth listening to, by which I judged that she must have heard Muir expressing his opinions on Grosvenor, as he did, freely and loudly, on most things. They went away together down the street, and I was not surprised when Elsie stopped her visits to the lecture-room.

Of this I was glad, for her blue eyes had begun to haunt me pitifully, and I saw that she had lost her lover, although I doubted whether he had gained anything in exchange.

The month was doing its work on Grosvenor too. He grew positively boisterous, his sentences longer and more involved than ever, his diagrams more ingeniously far-fetched and incomprehensible. He held long discussions with Miss Verney,



from which he came radiant and hopeful of everything. He talked of modern teaching methods as if they were entirely superseded. To hear him, one would think that he held the key to all knowledge, and shortly intended to unlock all the secrets of the universe. At times, when he was not lecturing or discussing, he moved restlessly about, planning and plotting I know not what ; but if he happened to be alone, one often heard his great voice thundering through the corridors, as if he must shout or die. Thus it was with affairs around me in the latter half of that month. Just then, disappointed in the failure of some of my own private plans, I suddenly sickened of the whole thing. It was a weariness to the flesh, and, late one evening, I packed my bag for a start by the early morning train, and then went out to roam the streets a little before bed.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### A DESERTER

WHEN I stepped out into the street that night it was just half-past nine ; the moon was rising and was nearly at the full, and away on the parade I could hear the bugle-call for the tattoo.

This drew me on to-night, as it always did, and presently I stood at the edge of the esplanade, listening to the drums and pipes, and wondering whether anywhere else they sounded as well.

For the Castle, with its fortifications, is seated on the extreme end and height of a long ridge. All the way from Holyrood you are coming up-hill, with the slopes falling away to left and right, though you do not see that, except now and then, because of the tall seven- and eight-floored houses that rise on either side of you in the Canongate, High Street, Lawnmarket and Castlehill. But at the upper end of the ridge sits the Castle, on the Castle Rock, which falls sheer away to the north, south and west, so that you can only reach it by the east, crossing the esplanade.

To this esplanade, on certain evenings at half-past nine, come the pipers and drummers of the Highland garrison and play the tattoo, watched by those tourists who happen to know what is going on, and by bare-legged children who have not yet ceased to be curious in such matters. The big Highlanders march down the parade and up again, like white-coated ghosts

in the twilight, playing a shrill march as they go. Then halting in the middle of the esplanade, they play reels and strathspeys, and at last, maybe, a lament, until the long, mournful call of the 'Last Post' is sounded by the bugles, echoing out over the city and mounting away up to the stars, as the city clocks strike ten, after which the Castle lies quiet until reveillé, except for its guard.

I watched until the notes of the 'Last Post' died away and the plaids fluttered over the bridge and in at the Castle gate. Then I turned, and, passing down the street, went quietly and slowly through what is called the Old Town. This lies in the straight line between Holyrood and the Castle, and is made up of the most ancient houses in Edinburgh. Here the nobility lived when Edinburgh was a royal city, and here and there, in the narrow wynds and closes, one can still find their quaint mottoes and coats-of-arms above the doorways. Go up their stairs now, and you will see that the houses of the proudest of the old nobility are let in single rooms to the poorest and the lowest of the people. As for myself, I am content that it should be so, while they are allowed to stand at all. Such close packing may not have hurt our forefathers so much, scarcely in their houses as they were at all, except at bedtime, and often making their bed on the open hillside, but we, who seem to be largely indoor animals, need healthier quarters. The glamour of tradition hangs over the place still, and, as I passed down, it seemed to me repeopled by ruffling Cavaliers and stern-faced Puritans. Here was St. Giles, with, however, its Lucken Booths cleared away and the Tolbooth prison gone long ago, though the Porteous riots are kept in our memories by Scott. Here, too, was the Tron, better known to me as the place for drunkenness *ad nauseam* on New Year's Eve than for any other reason.

• Down further still I went, through the hot August evening, past crowds of loitering folks who had come out of their sweltering rooms to get what fresh air they might in the narrow street; past John Knox's house, still kept spotless and sternly bare, even as one might imagine it to have been in his own day; past stinking fish-shops and noble houses, until the street widened out at Holyrood.

Here I stopped for a moment, to decide where I should tramp next. Away to the right, Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags stood out in the moonlight, and I thought how pleasant the air would be at the top, and almost went that way. But, as

I turned, I suddenly remembered that, if I meant to go off to-morrow, I must leave a message at Grosvenor's house, in the West End ; so, with a last look at the quiet hills above me, I turned away, and passed west by the Calton Gaol. The moonlight made even that look less unpleasant that night, and silvered the paint on the flagstaff, which, as far as I knew, was never used except when the black flag flaunted out upon it in the early morning to show that we had taken the responsibility of sending one of ourselves to death.

It was eleven now, and the loiterers in the bars of Princes Street came straggling out as I went by. Traffic was lessening, the street was already tolerably clear, and one could see the long, uninterrupted line of lights, stretching from east to west, on the one side, while on the other lay the silent gardens, where the leaves hung as if asleep in the quiet moonlight under the Castle Rock. I kept to that quieter side of the street all the way, until I crossed to go northward again, for Grosvenor's house lay beyond the Dean Bridge. Once off the main streets, there was very little noise, and as I crossed the bridge, I could hear the faint murmur of the Water of Leith as it ran over some stones far below. I stopped to listen and to look over, but had scarcely glanced down before I felt a hand on my arm. It was only a policeman, who let go as soon as he assured himself that I was not there to make a closer acquaintance with the shadowy depths, and we talked together as we leant with our elbows on the low parapet over which so many have gone.

He was a Highlander, as many, if not most, of these tall men are, and he told me how sometimes, when he was on duty there, the water called away down below through the silence of the night, until he was reminded of the burns further north, and of the wild stories of Kelpies that haunt the streams and pull down the man who ventures there.

'Hark to it !' he said, and craning over, I heard its laughter, and saw a white streak where the water foamed over a little fall.

'I think folk hear it and must needs go,' he said. 'There was a poor soul watching and hearkening only to-night.'

'Have you ever seen one go over ?' I asked him ; but he shook his head.

'Never yet, but some night, if I bide here, some poor body 'll be too quick for me, I doubt.'

'May that never be !' I said, and, wishing him good-night, with a last glance down, I went on to Grosvenor's house, for

although I knew him to be a man who kept late hours, I thought I could not present myself much later.

The man-servant who opened the door thought his master was busy in the study, and I said that I would go to him there ; but the man suggested the dining-room, and I followed him. This room, like all the rest of the house, bore curious signs of the man who owned it, and on the whole looked more like a curiosity shop than a comfortable eating-room. The tendency was rather to the curious than the beautiful. I saw no easy chair by the fire, and, indeed, there was no fireplace, but a gas-stove, a thing which I abhor. Of books I saw none. There were a few records of the transactions of learned societies, and that was all. There were pictures by well-known artists on the walls, but they were of subjects which one could not believe the artists to have chosen, and, indeed, I knew that form and colour were of secondary importance to Grosvenor, who got the pictures painted to order, trying to make art the servant of science, and expecting his artists to express very queer things in paint. In a recess there stood a large vivarium, in which the Professor kept some of the snakes whose psychology he studied so closely. While I was looking about me, and trying to understand the man more clearly through his surroundings—or as he would have put it, his environment—Grosvenor came in. I heard his voice booming down the stair long before he came, and guessed that he must be in high spirits.

He came with both his hands outstretched.

‘My dear fellow ! What brings you here now ? You’re not really going to run away ?’

‘I shall for a week or ten days, at any rate,’ I said. ‘I want a change.’

‘A change ! Why, look at me ! A change of work is all you need. Come, now, let me tell you some of my plans.’

‘When I come back,’ I said, ‘if you haven’t forgotten them ; but not now. I only came down to let you know that I was going.’

He took me by the shoulders, and, looking at me pathetically, sighed in a touching way.

‘One after another you desert me.’

‘I believe I mentioned ten days,’ I said.

‘Ah, yes, but you do it without consulting me. Where am I to find loyalty ?’

‘Where it’s due to you, I hope, Professor,’ I said.

But he shook his head in a melancholy manner.

'Fortunately a few remain,' he said. 'Now, my lecture for to-morrow sums up my arguments and proofs against education, so-called, as it at present exists. If you stay to-morrow—as you surely will, my dear Tregenna, unless you wish to wound me deeply—you will have very conclusive proof of the value of my recent research. I shall to-morrow establish a new method of teaching, and prove its value incontestably. You will stay, I am sure, and be associated with this, one of the greatest movements of the age.'

'My movement at present is to the west coast, Professor,' I said. 'I leave by the 7.15 to-morrow morning, and shall no doubt see your lecture fully reported in the "Scotsman."'

At this he broke out into vehement and contemptuous reproach. I fully believe now that the man was mad, that the work and excitement of the last few weeks, with this certainty of triumph on the morrow, had already turned his brain. He spoke to me as I would not have spoken to a dog. He abused me as a sluggard, a turncoat, a poltroon, and followed me to the door with sarcasms which would have stung had I placed any value on his assertions. As I moved out, he slammed the door behind me, and when I had crossed the road and looked frowning back, I saw that he had already returned to his study and his work. His figure was sharply outlined in shadow upon the window, standing erect and stiffly, then the shadow moved forward and sank, and I saw it no more.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### THE EARL'S BIRTHDAY

I WENT back to my room that night, marvelling over Grosvenor's enthusiasm and certainty of success in this fresh surprise which he was going to launch upon the world. I wondered, too, who was entangled in this last scheme, and whether they were biters or bitten.

It always appeared to me that, some day, he would meet with someone more astute than himself, and that, blinded by his own marvellous successes, he would fall an easy prey. He had a tremendous belief in himself, which helped him very much when he needed to gain the confidence and sympathy

of others, and this he always needed, and always had from someone, otherwise he would drop his scheme of the moment. For he was very sensitive to ridicule and would rather, always in pursuit of some highly romantic idea, seem criminal than silly. A very small following, however, made him bold against all things, and he had weak points which the right persons might easily see and avail themselves of. The uncommon, the hidden, the mysterious, always attracted him. A symbol suited his taste better than a word, and the more occult it was the better it pleased him. He led people by tickling their imagination as well as his own, and by the time they discovered that tickling and starvation may go together, he had found others to be worked upon in their places. The word 'Philistine' is one of which many are afraid, and it was so convenient to apply, and so well used by him on those who had ceased to be tickled, that they usually kept silent, or carried their aching hearts elsewhere.

The past and the future always attracted him more than the present, because both were shadowy, and those able to make him believe that they possessed greater knowledge of either than he did, would go a long way towards controlling him.

Miss Verney for the present was his pet pupil, and most docile she had become ; but I did not see how she could help him, except by sympathy and admiration, which, to judge by her manner, she had lately developed to a wonderful extent. As for his behaviour to myself that night, I did not pay much attention to it. He was obviously over-excited, and I was becoming careless of his praise or blame. If it suited his purpose to be friendly again, he would be quite ready to apologise. If it did not, why, I was freed from the risk of becoming the tool of another. With this I put him out of my mind altogether. Fond as I was of Edinburgh, I wished to be quit of her for a few days, and to take no thought of her with me. I ate some supper alone in the dining-room, thinking as I did so of the pleasant days that I hoped to have, for I had decided where I would go for a rest. I had been promised by the Countess of Jura that, if I came West to them, I should neither interfere with their arrangements nor be interfered with.

'You, I believe, can afford to be proud,' she had written, 'but we cannot. Jura has no medical man here, and would like your advice about some alterations in the lodge and the

cottages near by—drains, I think, or something equally nasty and mysterious. He won't pay you for it, so it's no use sending in a big bill. But if you'll come, you can read or row or shoot or fish with us, and he'll worm what he wants out of you at meals. There is no one else going to be here for another fortnight ; the grouse party has gone off. Jura has no one to shoot with, except when neighbours come, and "We can't know everybody," you remember.'

I read this over again while I sat at supper, with other nonsense of the same kind, and decided that I was likely to enjoy myself. I even began to whistle as I went upstairs, a light-hearted trick which I had forgotten lately, and only stopped as I passed Reid's old room, which was still empty, unused by the other men and avoided by the servants, among whom I knew there was a firm belief that his death had never been satisfactorily explained, that the place was still occupied by his ghost, and that his violin could be heard by anyone bold enough to go along the corridor at midnight.

It was almost midnight now, but I heard nothing except the wind in the keyhole, and did not wait for midnight to hear more. I had packed before going out that evening, so went straight to bed, and the next morning trained to Gourrock, thence went by steamer to Ardrishaig, where I was met by Lord Jura and a high dogcart, in which he looked very small and boyish.

The next week passed very pleasantly, and he and I got more friendly and less shy of one another while fishing and shooting together. When it was possible we preferred to go out alone, and there was no room for ceremony, for example, in a small boat where we took turns to cast and to row. Also stiffness was impossible before Lady Jura—that is, when we three were alone together. Before strangers she put on the airs of which I had seen a specimen at the never-to-be-forgotten meeting of the Society for the Relief of Superannuated Cabmen. At these times, as I rashly told her one evening, she reminded me of nothing else so much as a Scotch thistle, and she retorted that she was sorry thistles didn't keep off donkeys! My gravity and my degree, I regret to say, never impressed her with any idea of my importance or the necessity for politeness. When we chatted, I was still the medical student, she the Signorina Neroni, and sometimes, usually just when we were saying good-night, she would launch out into droll recollections of the

London days, in a way that made her husband lie back and shriek with laughter in his chair.

I found many other good points in her which had not shown themselves before me in the old days. She was very fond of children and animals, who returned the compliment. If she came out with the lunch when we were shooting, it was always with a bodyguard of a deerhound, a collie, a couple of Scotch terriers, and probably a mongrel or two ; lunch, therefore, was generally made the more lively by a shindy amongst them and the dogs we had brought out.

The bare-legged youngsters of the place seemed to worship her, and one devil-may-care little scamp, whom they could not keep at school by persuasion or punishment, went now for the sake of her promise, made because of his straightforwardness and pluck, that he should be her gillie when he knew enough to leave school.

Among the heather, by the burns, or at the peat fireside when the day was over, she was a most pleasant hostess and delightful companion. Her spirits never flagged, her strength never failed, and when I praised her for that, she, frank as ever, told me that I was a goose not to remember her training.

'What's the "heather step," I'd like to know, you stupid, that it should *fag* me after the drilling I got as a girl? Do you think that to come over a mile or two of hillside with Sandy and the lunch-basket is harder work than it was to dance a *pas seul*? My faith! I'd like to see you try both and say which was harder!'

On one solemn festival while I was there she had to play a more dignified part, and I was glad to see how easily she was able to do it.

Lord Jura told me apologetically one evening, as we lounged by the fire after a long day's walking, that on a certain day soon he was afraid there would be no shooting, unless, he added, as a bright idea, I cared to shoot by myself.

('Silly fellow!' from the Countess. 'Do you think I shall let him do that, even if he's so stupid as to want to?')

I looked from one to the other in some consternation, fearing that, perhaps, I was going to be one too many on the day named.

'What's going to happen? You promised not to let me change any of your plans. Please tell me if anything makes it more convenient for me to be out of the way.'



She sat up indignant.

'Jura, if I throw this book at that stupid fellow, I suppose you'll say I'm bad form, or inhospitable, or something. I wish you'd throw yours.'

'What have I done?' I asked.

'Been stupid again, that's all! No, Jura, it's no use shaking your head at me. For one thing, he can see you, and for another, I'm not going to mind. This silly fellow needs *savoir faire*, and some woman must sacrifice herself to teach him.'

'But what have I done?'

'Let your silly pride show itself again, that's what you've done! You're not nearly a big enough personage to be in the way anywhere here, sir. Do you understand?'

Lord Jura flung himself back in the easy-chair with a groan and a look of mute apology at me, while I laughed. I hadn't the slightest inclination to be offended with the tyrant opposite.

'I feel as small as you could wish. Shall I know what's going to happen now, or must I wait like a good boy until I'm told?'

The Countess shook her head reflectively and meditated, but Lord Jura yawned and spoke:

'It's only my birthday or something. I'm afraid it will bore you.'

Her hand was not on his mouth quickly enough, and her indignant attempt to shake him was a failure.

'You wretch! I never meant him to know until the pipes woke him in the morning. You've done it now!'

'Lady Jura, if you shake him much more, I warn you, as a medical man, you may prevent the birthday!'

This was to a certain extent true, for in her desperation and anxiety to make some impression on him, she had got her fingers inside his collar, and he was laughing and choking alternately.

At this she let him go, and sat down to explain.

It seemed that one thing and another had prevented them from celebrating any one of the three birthdays there since their marriage, and it had been decided among the people on the estate that this time it must be done in style. To please his wife, Lord Jura left the matter for her to settle, and after a grand council with the agent, the steward, and some of the

tenants, she decided that the thing could be done. There was to be a dinner, games and music. A big barn was to be got ready for a dance, since there was no room in the shooting-box, and everyone was coming on the understanding that they must take things as they found them.

'And if you think you're going to miss all this, you're mistaken,' her ladyship concluded. 'You're very necessary. Somebody will be sure to break his neck in the races, or someone's else in tossing the caber, and if nothing else happens, our ears will want mending afterwards, for all the pipers for ten miles round are coming, and there are a lot of them, I can tell you.'

'I wouldn't miss it for anything,' I told her. 'I mean to stay, now I know what's on, whether you ask me or not.'

So that was decided once for all, and for the next few evenings after dinner we had no peace, whatever we might have done in the way of exercise during the day, but were made to practise reel steps, eightsome and foursome, and the sword dance and the Highland fling and strathspeys, until we vowed it was harder work than tramping all day over the moors.

When the great day came I was awakened, in the early morning, by the pipes under my window. I jumped up and peeped out from behind my blind to see what I could, and there were nineteen pipers standing on the gravel of the little drive underneath, blowing away in the misty September morning as if they would burst, while the dew sparkled on the turf and the mist curled away round the hilltops, and a great heron, startled by the unholy din, rose from the little burn that ran through the garden and flapped away on wide, outspread wings down to the loch.

'If those fellows don't get emphysema it's not their fault,' I muttered to myself, and had gone back from the window to dress when the pipes stopped, and the pipers gave a yell, at which I rushed to my post again.

Lord Jura had looked out of his window, which was not far off, and proceeded to make a speech, being, as he confidentially told me afterwards, clad in little but pyjamas and an ulster.

The enthusiasm was so tremendous that I overcame my natural bashfulness, and stuck my head out too, but made nothing of the speech—which was not surprising, since it was in Gaelic.

My appearance was opportune, however, for Lord Jura, as he told me afterwards, was at a loss to know how he should finish up, but did so by reminding them that the doctor, his friend, was a Cornishman, and therefore a brother Celt, and deserved a Highland welcome—which apparently meant a noise, and was given to me promptly, and Jura having explained, I bowed my acknowledgments, and gave them a word or two of Cornish for what it was worth.

Something more was wanted, however, and after a consultation among themselves, the oldest piper came forward. A grand old fellow he was, deep-chested and big-limbed, white-bearded, and gaily dressed in full piper's costume, with nearly a dozen medals on his breast, some war-medals—for he had been in a Highland regiment—and the rest *badges* won in pipe-contests.

He spoke in Gaelic, and the rest listened silently, backing him up in a chorus at the end.

Jura began to grin like the mischievous boy he was, and spoke over his shoulder :

‘They want to wish you good-morning.’

I heard a startled exclamation from behind him, but he persisted :

‘Oh, put on a dressing-gown or a tea-gown, or my ulster—no, I’ve got that on myself. Put on any blessed thing you like, and wish them *ciamar tha sibh*.”

‘Wish them what?’

A pause, and a series of murmurs from inside.

‘Yes, that’s right—come on quick, before you forget it.’

So in another moment Lady Jura’s head appeared, with her hair in beautiful disorder, and she uttered the magic words.

What a yell there was ! She was going to withdraw hastily, but Jura prevented her.

‘Steady, here’s another speech,’ and the old piper began again, with a running and, I expect, free translation from Jura.

‘He welcomes the Rose of the South, which has been bound to the Heather of the North, and he swears that they think the Rose their own. Says that the children love you, and the hearts and lives of the people are your own, to chuck about as you please. Swears that your eyes shame the sun, and that your foot is too light to brush the dew from the lawn (better dance with him to-night). Also that the roe-deer is your twin sister for gentle ways. May you have happiness and peace in

your home, and love everywhere ; may you '—here he stopped and began to laugh, 'Oh, I can't translate any more, I'm too tired,' and the translation came to an end, and presently so did the speech.

But this necessitated another speech from him, which, however, did not take long. It was easy to see, in spite of his laughing version of what was said, that he was more deeply touched by their words than he cared to own, and his voice now had a ring and fire about it that made me think clannishness must be very much alive still. All he owed to me afterwards was that he had thanked them, and hoped that they would make short work of the breakfast that was ready for them all. Then we, or at any rate I, went to sleep again for an hour, and this was the beginning of the birthday.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### A RACE FOR LOVE

WHEN I got down to the breakfast-room that morning my host and hostess were already there, looking at the birthday presents, which were spread on the sideboard. I hung back rather awkwardly, for I had nothing fit to offer in comparison with the rest, and I felt shabby and mean therefore. But they called me to see something, and when I went forward and gave Jura my best wishes, and nothing more, they very soon made me feel ashamed of myself for supposing that a present was needed. I was not allowed to look at the things long, though.

'This is the one comfortable meal you'll have to-day, you two,' Lady Jura announced. 'There'll be people here to lunch, and you must go to dinner in the tents after the games, and there'll be people here to dinner, and ever so many things to see to all day. You won't have peace again until to-morrow morning, so make the most of your chance while you have it.'

This was good advice, and we set to in grand style, while her ladyship, dressed from head to foot in the clan tartan, and to my surprise managing to look bright and bonny even in that, chatted and laughed over the early serenade, while the pipers, like giants refreshed after their breakfast, blew outside the window, until one must think the whole countryside would

have known what a wonderful day it was, if everyone had not known it perfectly well already.

A great pile of letters lay unopened for Lord Jura, but he decided that he must leave them so until to-morrow, and soon after breakfast we all three went out, to see what preparations were being made. Tents were being raised, promising looking barrels were being rolled along, and great tables of cold meats and game were being spread, to be attacked by the people after the sports. For they were to begin at two, and who among the runners, or the dancers, or the pipers, would take more than a bite, with maybe a sup of good whisky, knowing the work that lay before them? Whereas after their labours, the winners would be rewarded, and the losers perhaps a bit consoled, by the good things that would be ready. And the prizes of two sets of pipes for the pipers, of quaighs for the racers, of brooches and of shoe-buckles for the dancers, were spread upon a table for all to see, and it being the Highlands, there was no need for a detective or anyone else to watch the table, even when, to please everybody, Lady Jura had her husband's presents brought and spread out too.

In this way the morning flew by, and the guests came walking, riding and driving in from all sides, for there was no railway within twenty miles—and please Heaven there never will be, at any rate in our time! Then there was lunch at one in the house for friends, who took it as they came, and outside those who liked had whisky or milk and bread and cheese, while the men looked at the tables in the tents, and tightening their belts, kept appetites for the evening.

After lunch came the games. First to stir our blood the pipers went round, strutting with chests thrown out and heads back, while their tartan plaids floated over their shoulders and the streamers of their pipes flaunted in the wind. They played the gathering call of the clan, and then came the pipe contests. Reels and schottisches, strathspeys, marches and coronachs—there were prizes for the best of all these, and of more whose names I never knew. Here Donald Moir, the spokesman in the early morning, added another to his badges, and when her ladyship had pinned it herself beside the rest, he stepped back, swelling with pride, and played a quick-step march and asked leave to call it after her. Then came the dances, and a dispute began.

A tall, fair-haired young fellow, Duncan, the son of Donald

Moir, one of the keepers, but scarcely more than a boy, stepped into the ring for the sword dance, but was clutched at by half a dozen other men and hauled back, only to push his way in again. The noise became greater, and her ladyship grew curious where she sat at the opposite edge of the ring, with her guests about her.

'What is it, Jura? I can't make out what all the fuss is about!'

'No more can I from here,' he answered, and went across with me to see.

They changed from Gaelic into English as they saw us coming.

'It shall not be so.'

'Ay, but I will haf it so.'

'It is you will haf lost it, Duncan, if you will be so foolish,' and so on.

'What's this bother about?' asked Jura as we got near them, and it was old Donald Moir himself who answered:

'This foolish boy is for the long race, and it will be the next after the dance, and he will win the race if he is fresh, but not if he dances; but he will dance, and the winner of the long race will not be one of us.'

'He must do as he will,' answered Jura. 'What do you say, Donald?'

The boy stood a moment and then looked up blushing:

'It is both I will win, if they let me be.'

'Bravo, you! Let him do it, and say no more.' And he turned back with me.

'Do you know the secret of it all? There's more depends on this than you think.'

'I know nothing more than that the boy's greedy for *kudos* or prizes.'

'Ay, but you don't know what the biggest prize will be, man! It's no less than Jean's maid they're fighting for.'

'And a good prize, too,' I said, 'if it's the yellow-haired, grey-eyed girl who sometimes walks with Lady Jura.'

'That's the lassie. See her watching them now, in all her finery! There are three lovers—Sandy Maclean, who was third in the coronachs, and who's a great man with the swords but no runner; Ian MacIvor, who is not one of us, but runs like a deer and will not try the dance, though he's good at it, because the race is a bigger thing; and here's the boy, Duncan Moir,

who means to try both, and faith, I hope he wins them ! If he does, he's safe to get the girl too. No woman could refuse such a plucky beggar ; besides he's the favourite already, Jean tells me.'

'In that case he might stand by, and let the others do their best or worst,' I said ; 'but good luck to him !' And when we had got back to Lady Jura's chair and told her what was the matter, she lifted her hand with a smile, and the dances began.

There were five men in, but it quickly narrowed down to the two of them—Sandy Maclean and Duncan Moir, who were both called into the ring a second time.

'Glad I'm not to be the judge,' said Jura. 'I should want to settle it at once, for the boy to rest a moment before the race. I'm to judge that, but it'll be easier.'

Sandy Maclean danced first, and I, looking on, thought none could do better. But Duncan would not give way. He stepped to the swords, and as he did so, Lady Jura, behind whom I stood, began to laugh.

'The hussy ! That'll make ~~her~~ anything will.'

'What ?' I asked.

'Didn't you see her ? The ribbon round her neck came from Duncan this morning. I saw her put her lips to the loose end of it as he passed her. He'll dance it out now.'

And so he did, as if made of india-rubber and steel, and won it too, and the yells of his kinsmen were something worth hearing.

'Bring the silly boy across to me, Jura, and I'll give him his buckles at once. It makes time for them to get their breath.'

So Duncan came over and got his silver buckles, and a word in his ear too, as her ladyship leant forward to give them :

'Go behind us, Duncan, into the tent, and rest five minutes. You shall be called for the race.' And away he went.

Then Sandy was called up for the second prize, and the guileful woman praised him, and condoled with him, and asked him to be sure to come to the house that night to dance with her ; which not only pleased poor Sandy mightily, but also took time, and all the while Duncan was stretching his long legs, and taking deep breaths, and being rubbed down and made springy and fresh again for the run.

Now the course was as follows :

We were gathered on a gently sloping brae-side, which ran down to a wide ditch. On the other side of the ditch was a broad field of stubble, and then the ditch again. Then you crossed the cart-road to the steep side of the Ben, which rose with cliff and slope and crag, beetling over the loch. At the top of the Ben, which you might reach as you liked, up the winding sheep-paths, or straight through the heather and the stones, was a cairn, and on the top of the cairn was a flat stone. There Jura and I had gone quietly the night before and had lain tokens, of which each runner must show one when he came in. No one but we two knew that the tokens were half-sovereigns, which we hoped would console those who were plucky enough to start against such runners as Ian and Duncan and get to the top at all. The men might come down as they liked, and here the risk came ; for a man might come by the paths, and that was bad enough, at racing pace, or he might take a bee-line and crash through heather and burns with one or two deep jumps by the way. No wonder this was looked upon as the event of the afternoon, and no wonder that the best men were not ashamed to try for it.

Old Donald's pipes screamed out to call the men together, and seven stepped, with long, swinging strides, to the starting-place. They were formed up in line by Lady Jura's chair, to start at a pistol shot, and the man who passed the chair first on the way back would be the winner.

We were all excited over this, and it needed some care to keep the crowd from pressing on the racers, but at last the pistol cracked, and they slipped away like deerhounds. They flashed down the brae-side, over the ditch, across the stubble, and over the ditch again, almost in line as they had started. But now the struggle began, as they took different sheep-tracks and faced the hill. Ian MacIvor was first by a pace or two on the hillside, and took the straightest track, with Duncan close at his heels, while the others swung off to right and left, on easier paths. Up they went, and up, while we watched them through our glasses, and the crowd shouted itself hoarse. At one point Ian slipped, and Duncan was past him in a moment, but at the stone their hands went out together, and they turned side by side, while the third man, a plucky little gillie, was only a few seconds behind them. Down they came, neck and neck, and half-way, by a break-neck jump, the gillie was beside them, and the three ran level for fifty yards, while the other



four were thought no more of. But old Donald, who stood gripping his pipes and swearing horribly in Gaelic beside me, now sent such a skirl up the hillside that Duncan heard it as he ran, and instead of following the other two while they turned along the edge of a broad chasm at the bottom of which ran a burn, he jumped at it like a hunter, and throwing himself forward, stumbled at the opposite edge, and, rolling over, lay there clutching at the heather.

There he stayed while the other two raced round, and, watching through the glasses, I thought he had been stunned ; but presently he drew a deep breath, and, struggling to his feet, stood still, while all the time the other two were racing, and had nearly regained their places. But old Donald blew again as if his very soul were in the pipes, and Duncan, throwing up one hand while the other dangled at his side, started away again, and rushing down, with the loose stones clattering behind him, struggled up the brae and fell against the cord at the winning-post, just as the last two cleared the near ditch and came up together.

He had broken his collar-bone at that jump, and his was the only accident ; but I don't think he minded much when Lady Jura handed him his prize and then gave him over to my tender mercies, adding in a sly whisper that if I wanted anything fetched, she could spare her maid to help me.

After that they tossed the caber and did many other great deeds, but I didn't see them, for I was busy with Duncan until the sports were over and the people trooped to the tents and sat down for dinner. There we left them in peace until it was thought that hunger must be satisfied, and then Jura and his wife, followed by the rest of us, passed in and stood where the steward was carving at the head of a long table. There the two of them drank to the clan and to the tenants, from the silver quaigh they had given Jura that morning, and then we went in twos and threes into the house, where there was tea and coffee for those who wanted it before dressing for dinner.

At the dinner and the dance that followed Jura had good reason to be proud of his wife, and he looked as if he were. She had dressed far more elaborately than I had ever seen her before, to please him and to do honour to his guests, and wherever she went the people's eyes followed her. She moved like a queen through them all, quieter than I was accustomed to see her, but with smiles and kind welcome for everybody.

I stood in the old barn, which was hung with flags and trophies of arms, keeping near the musicians, since they always interested me, for I felt too lazy to dance and was not needed. I have always felt that my imagination moves most freely after a day in the open air, and especially when I am a little tired. So it happened that night. The real seemed unreal, the unreal became plain and conspicuous.

The scores of couples, full of life and dancing wildly, were like shadows, their voices faint and far off. The old claymores and muskets on the walls seemed far more real, and a tattered flag or two waved, as if being caught at by ghostly hands. The pipes were human that night. They moaned and yelled, they laughed and cried, and through them all I seemed to hear the note of Reid's violin as I heard it last.

As I stood there alone, I saw old Donald Moir watching me time after time, and when Jura, passing along with his wife for the moment at his side, stopped to thank the pipers for their playing, I saw old Donald look my way and say something to him. Jura followed his eye, and, seeing me, answered again, and presently came over laughing.

'What are you doing there all alone?'

'Watching, and enjoying myself,' I said.

'Donald Moir wants to ask you something. Will you come to him?'

'Of course,' I said, and, as we went, Donald stepped a little apart from the other pipers to greet us.

There he stood and looked at me intently, while I waited for him to say what he wanted, thinking what a grand old weather-beaten face he had, and promising myself to ask for the story of the sword-cut that had just missed his keen grey eye, and showed white over the high cheek-bone.

• When at last he spoke it was in Gaelic to Jura, who translated for him.

'He wishes to be allowed to speak in the Gaelic, although he has a little of the English. He asks if you know what second sight is.'

'Of course I do, though it isn't spoken of among the Cornish as it is among you.'

'He asks whether you know that you have it, or could have it.'

I laughed a little.

'I am a Bachelor of Medicine with a scientific training.

I know nothing of these things. Science doesn't recognise them.'

Though Duncan Moir was doubtful of his English, he understood me well enough, and spoke quickly to Jura without waiting for a translation.

'He says that your scientific men live in cities and laugh at all they do not understand.'

'Maybe, but what's he driving at?'

'Since you don't know your power, he says, and don't use it, the power is weak and not to be depended on.'

'Quite scientific that, anyway!'

'But he is sure that you have warnings, though you don't know them or make use of them, and that, for example, you see things or hear them to-night. He knows it by your face.'

At that moment the pipes struck up for a reel, and again Reid's fiddle sounded through it all, while I could have sworn that, as a couple passed us to take their places in a foursome, the sphinx looked out at me from the girl's eyes.

'It is true,' I said, 'that I have my fancies, but so has everyone!'

The old man shook his head vehemently and spoke again, Jura translating as before :

'It's not the same ; he says you have the power, but it dies in the crowded city life. If you stayed amongst us it would grow. But that is not the point. Donald has the sight too, as we all know. He foretold the death of my father and my uncle while they were abroad. If he lives, laugh as you like, he will be the first to foresee my own death.'

'Hard on your medical man !' I said. 'Go on.'

'He says that people with the gift see others' troubles coming more readily than their own ; that he sees you moving among shadows, and warns you to watch how and where you go.'

The Celtic blood in me thrilled to this. There were the superstitions of generations in me, and they were stirred, but whatever pluck I had awoke too.

'Thank him for his warning,' I said. 'Tell him, if you please, Lord Jura, that I am much obliged, and will keep his words in my mind. Tell him too, though, that the man who is frightened by shadows may easily be killed by them. I see'—and I pointed to his cheek—'that a man may meet worse, and live to warn others.'

Jura laughed, and Donald himself smiled, and then, saluting us both, went back to his place.

'What can I do to show him I'm grateful?' I asked Jura. 'I can't tip an old hero like that!'

'Haven't you been looking after his boy, the apple of his eye, already? He'll do more than that for you if he gets the chance. Besides, aren't you my guest?'

'There spoke the chieftain!' I said laughing. 'Very well, I won't rack my brains over it, but if you know of anything I can do to please him later on, just let me know.'

'Look after yourself, then,' he said laughing, and turned away to ask someone for a dance.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### NOBLESSE OBLIGE

THAT night's excitement ended at last with a torchlight dance in the cool night air, an eerie thing of lights and shadows, of humming pipes and of glittering buckles and flashing brooches, whose wearers danced as though they were then beginning the evening, instead of ending it.

Then one by one the folk went off, until only we three were left standing in the porch, with a chill shiver of a breeze rustling the leaves, and the sky beginning to grow grey, and the birds stirring and chirping in the bushes, while the sound of the pipes dwindled away among the hills.

'I wouldn't have missed this for a good deal,' I said. 'I'm very much obliged to you for having a birthday just now, Lord Jura.'

• 'Do you think they've had a good time?'

'No, I don't think at all,' I said; 'I know it. They couldn't help themselves. I'm going to see if my patient is comfortable, Lady Jura, and then to bed.'

So we said good-night, and I was reminded that I needn't get up until I chose, after such a day, and I went across the burn to a cottage where Duncan Moir was staying for the time, to be under my care, and finding him asleep, I went up to my own room and slept dreamlessly myself until late the next morning.

I have reason to think that, if opportunities had been granted

me, I should have proved myself to have the qualities that go to the making of a very fine and selfish epicure. As it is, I believe that, among many of my acquaintances, I have credit for being a bit of an ascetic. This is simply because I can't always force myself to believe that half a loaf is better than no bread. If I can't have what I want, I seem practically to tell myself, then at least I won't take what I don't want in place of it. This is my mood sometimes, when I will dine off porridge (the best porridge, mind you !) because I can't afford anything more than plain roast and boiled, and drink water because I can't even know the best brands of wine by name, much less drink them. The epicurean side of me had showed itself strongly while this visit lasted, though I don't suppose anyone noticed it but myself. I felt that I had years of petty cares and anxieties behind me, and before me a life of plain living and self-denial, with none but the very simplest and least expensive of pleasures, and with no luxury at all. I was going to live a commonplace, humdrum sort of life, I thought, unable to be generous or extravagant in any way, unable even to enjoy the kindness of friends to the full, since I should never be in a position to return it. But here was a break. I was neither a student nor a medical practitioner. I had passed through the troubles of the first, I had not taken up the responsibilities of the second. I was holiday making, idle, irresponsible, and I enjoyed it in all sorts of little ways which the rich man cannot realise. When I went to my room at night, I enjoyed the idea that I might sleep as long as I chose, or keep awake. When I woke, I enjoyed being able to lie and watch the sunshine through the curtains; I even enjoyed the sound of the rain when it rained. It was delightful to sleepily stretch out my hand to the bell-rope, and know that presently a cup of coffee would come up, as good as I could make it myself (which, mind you, I think is saying a great deal). I enjoyed my bath more because I could take as long as I chose over it, and had neither class nor case waiting for me—only breakfast and whatever I liked after—the library with its books and new magazines, or the moors and the loch. I am glad to think that, even in that lazy state, I scarcely even thought of the library until we all three went there, as we generally did after dinner, but was out with rod or gun at quite a decent hour. Directly I got into the house, the fiction was started that I had been overworked or overworried or something, and that I must be taken care of, which meant

spoilt. I was made to understand that, although Jura, being an early riser, had his fixed hour for breakfast, and his wife generally breakfasted with him, yet that was in order to get through letters, &c., and be free with guests for the greater part of the day. They even pretended that it would be good of me to breakfast an hour later than they did, on that account, and I gradually slid into the way of it. Consequently that morning I was quite surprised to find that I was to have the pleasure of meeting both of them at breakfast.

'How is this?' I asked. 'It's shocking! Do you know that it's just half-past nine?'

'It might, by my appetite, be half-past ten,' said Jura. 'Be quick, or you won't get any breakfast. I could eat for a dozen.'

I looked apprehensively at the breakfast table, for I was hungry too, but it seemed quite able to bear our attack, and there was a comforting array of game pie, venison pasty, and other such trifles behind me, I noticed.

'What would you like to do to-day?' asked Lady Jura, after we had been supplied with coffee.

'The library's just full of things I haven't looked at yet,' I said promptly. 'I may stay there nearly all day, if you'll let me, unless I can come anywhere with you while Lord Jura looks at his letters and sees the steward and other people.'

'Some people,' said Jura confidentially to his coffee-cup, 'have no idea of getting anything done before breakfast.'

'I know a lazy fellow,' Lady Jura told the teapot, 'who supposes that everyone is as lazy as himself.'

'I know two people,' I said firmly to my plate, 'who are so proud that they must have managed something praiseworthy which they never expect to manage again.'

• There was a pause, and then :

'I'm afraid that's true, Jura,' from his wife.

'I'm afraid it is,' he admitted.

'Come now, confess, and say you're sorry, and perhaps I'll forgive you,' I said encouragingly.

'It only means that I felt restless this morning,' he said. 'Fresh year, you know; turned over new leaf, and so on. So I've seen to my letters, and talked to the steward, and can do what you like half an hour after breakfast.'

'I am ashamed and I apologise,' I said. 'I wish I could be sure of doing as well with my pile of correspondence in

Edinburgh. I'm afraid I must face that in a couple of days, Lady Jura.'

'Why, there are a dozen things to do before you go; and how is Duncan's collarbone to get on?' Lord Jura asked.

'If you run off like that, I'd like to know when you expect to be asked back again,' Lady Jura joined in. 'Just when you're getting stronger and beginning to do us credit. You'll disgrace the house and make us a bye-word if you go back looking so thin—I'd say scraggy, only I know Jura doesn't like to hear me using the word.'

'Dutiful wife you are!' murmured Lord Jura, looking at her.

'Well, I'll leave you to fight it out with him. Of course he mustn't go. Settle what you'll do to-day, you two, and I'll be back in half an hour'; and he went off to his own private den, half office and half study, with a good many suggestions of country life thrown in, in the shape of rods, casts, dog-collars, and so on.

After he had gone there was nothing said for a while. Lady Jura sat pouting a little and crumbling a piece of bread, while I went on quietly with breakfast, which I was taking in a more leisurely fashion than Lord Jura did.

'Tell me,' and here the Countess laid down her fork and looked at me closely, 'why are you going to run away?'

'Run away! You asked me for a fortnight, and I've hung on for a month. I never even offered to go after hearing that these other people that you expected couldn't come.'

'Well; and why can't you stay another month? We've decided not to budge until late in October. Jura would like you to, and so would I.'

I shook my head obstinately.

'It's very good of you both. It's extremely kind, but I've had a thorough rest and I must get back to work. I'm not likely to forget the good time I've had here. I can't expect such fun often.'

'Nonsense! You must take holidays wherever you are, and then you'll come to us. But Jura has been waiting to talk to you about that, only you won't say what your plans are, and we don't want to spoil them if they're good.'

'I'm going to get to work as soon as I can after going back, that's all. I can't say more until I've talked over things in Edinburgh.'

Her ladyship began to frown again, tapping impatiently on the floor with her foot.

'Why not talk here, and with us?'

I sat and looked at her in silence. I didn't mean to say what I thought, but my face must have shown it, for she flushed and rose impatiently.

'Yes, Dr. Tregenna, you wonder whether we care to know anything.'

'As a matter of fact, I don't,' I said. 'I am sure neither of you can be quite careless of anyone you've been so kind to. Let me be as plain as I can with you.'

'Well?'

'You must let me speak of my position, just for a moment, merely as a fact, and not a thing either to glory in or to be ashamed of. I'm a very poor man, and am likely to stay so. That has to be counted on. Therefore, although an easy life for a month is a delightful and, I believe, not a bad thing for me, I can't stand much of it.'

'Do you think us so luxurious, then?'

'Not at all. Lord Jura has plenty to do, I know, and does it awfully well, I think, even here. You've work, too. It wasn't all fun, I should think, making arrangements for yesterday. Besides,' and I began to laugh, 'you remember that the first time we met, in Edinburgh, you were on duty.'

'Ah, yes! Those cabmen, and Mrs. What's-her-name?—Reay-Carter! I got some fun out of that for Jura, at any rate. But the truth is, we want to know if you will stay here and ~~see~~ to our people. We've got to build a big house here, you know, and there's all the drainage to advise about, and the sick people to see, and all sorts of things. Jura was wondering whether you'd accept three hundred for a year, or perhaps four, with the understanding that you'd go, if we sent for you from one of our other places, to see anyone. We could find a lot for you to do.'

'Find a lot! Make it, you mean,' I said laughing. 'Why, there are scores of experienced senior men you could get for that.'

'We don't want them,' said her ladyship angrily. 'If we can't choose our own doctor, I should like to know who can!'

'It won't do,' I said, shaking my head. 'I can't run the risk of becoming an overpaid hanger-on.'



'Overpaid ! Why, I know cooks who get more.'

'Quite right too,' I said, laughing. 'With a good cook a medical man isn't so necessary. Besides, I never shall make quite a respectable, orthodox private physician, I'm afraid.'

'Who wants you to be orthodox? Are we orthodox?'

'Not overpoweringly,' I admitted. 'But still you'll come to that. Your position will force you into conventionalities.'

The Countess had gradually got excited, and was walking quickly up and down the room (how well she walked, too !) while I leant my shoulders against the mantelpiece ; but she turned now and stood just in front of me.

'Have you seen anything of that since you've been here?'

'Not a bit,' I said. 'If you'll let me say so without being impertinent, you've only changed—developed is a better word—just as far as was wanted for your new life. It's easy to see that Lord Jura is proud of you, and has every reason to be, Countess.'

Of course all this was cheek, or seems so at any rate, but it was what I had been wanting to tell her for a good many days, and since we were in for plain speaking, it slipped out quite naturally.

She was pleased too, and she blushed very prettily, making me a deep curtsy to hide it, and then looking me frankly in the eyes.

—'I'm very glad to hear you say so just once. Jura can't judge quite, you know. He's blind where I'm concerned. But I've done my best to keep him from being ashamed of me. It's easy enough here, where everyone is so kind and natural ; but in London, or even Edinburgh !'—she gave a little shudder—'I just go about like ice, to keep them from pain<sup>ing</sup> me sometimes. Some of the women would hurt me every time I met them, if they knew how easily they could do it.'

'Brutes !' I said.

'Oh, it's all right. I'm Countess of Jura, you know, anyway, so of course some of them have a grudge against me.'

• 'You astonish me !' I said sympathetically.

'Ah, you may laugh, but that's not what I wanted to say. You must please yourself about staying or going, but you were kind to Jane Black, and Jane Black doesn't forget it, nor her husband either !'

'It's simply absurd,' I said, 'to speak so often of such a trifle. There's no need for the Countess of Jura to remember it. The obligation, if there's any, has been paid fifty times over.'

'The Countess of Jura means to remember it, anyway,' she said, nodding her head with decision. 'And if there's any occasion, you'll find that the Countess of Jura and Jane Black are much the same sort of person, conventionalities or none !'

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### A LOST LEADER

IN spite of all their kind speeches and the ingenious arguments used by Lady Jura, I kept to my point, and at last made them understand that I really intended to go back to town, though I was very sorry to go. The question whether or no I would settle down, later on, near their part of the world was left open. I must get a year in Edinburgh first, if I could manage it, and then the country might suit me very well, if I could be sure of getting outside work enough to run no risk of being a mere hanger-on.

So I had my last shot and my last cast, and gave careful directions to Duncan Moir, who declared his intention of coming into Edinburgh to see me if further treatment was necessary. I shook hands too with old Donald, who came up to the house on the morning of my going and played us down the road. As we went over the top of the last brae seen from the house, I turned and looked where Lady Jura and he stood side by side. He was watching with his hand over his eyes, because of the sun, and presently the last skirl of the pipes died away as we turned the shoulder of the hill.

Lord Jura had noticed his attention, and spoke of it.

'The old man is interested in you. We never forget a kindness or an injury. The Moirs won't be happy till they've shown their kindly feeling somehow.'

'They've shown it quite enough,' I said, 'as everybody else has here. I go off with rather a sore heart, I can tell you, Lord Jura, although I do seem bent on going.'

'We shall see you in Edinburgh later on, as we go through,'

he said. 'Then we can talk over things again. And you'll write, of course?'

'Of course,' I said; 'and if I can do anything in Edinburgh for either of you, you'll let me know, won't you? I'm very much in your debt.'

'We count it all the other way still,' he said, and we were both rather silent for the rest of the way.

I stood on the deck of the 'Iona' and he upon the pier, until I could see him no longer, when I turned with a little sigh and went below to the saloon. My holiday was over, and my friends out of sight. Almost at once, however, I began scoffing at myself. What of the Tweedies? What of Clegg and the rest? It was certainly high time I came away, if life there had made me forgetful of such friends.

Going into the saloon, I went to look at the papers, trying to remember how long it was since I had seen one. I never thought of looking at them while I had outdoor life all day, and in the evenings books had been all around me that I was not likely to see elsewhere. I turned away, however, to the writing-tables, for I felt inclined to write a note to the friends I was leaving behind, and I thought it would perhaps please them. When I reached Gourrock, I remembered that I was not expected in Edinburgh, and that my rooms would be sure to need cleaning, so I wired from there, and stayed the night, leaving the next morning.

It was now near the end of September, and the dry summer had brought early harvest, and autumn tints. The harvests had been reaped and carried, the leaves had been shaken by a strong wind of the night before, the earlier fading ones drifted down now and again, and the next frost would strip many trees. The country was already showing signs of its coming winter sleep, and the melancholy of autumn made me melancholy too, till I almost forgot that, as surely as winter was creeping upon us, so surely must spring follow it.

I sat dreamily watching it all, while we swept through the bare fields and barren hills of East and Mid-Calder, until at last we reached Edinburgh.

Getting into a hansom, with baggage and game and fish piled on the top, I expected to reach my rooms in another ten minutes, but that was not to be.

As we drove out of the station, the unusual silent crowd caught my attention at once.

The people divided this way and that, but it was too late.

The way was blocked by a funeral procession, reaching away to our left as far as I could see, while the hearse was just before me. My cabman whipped his horse up, and tried to pass, but I called to stop him. I was not going to push for precedence against a dead man, and I sat there and watched, uncovering as the hearse passed close before us.

It was evidently a person of some consequence, and almost a public funeral. The huge hearse, with its nodding plumes and four black horses, was as richly ornamented as it might be. The great coffin inside could hardly be seen because of the wreaths and crosses piled about it. The undertaker's men could be counted by the dozen, and the hired coaches and private carriages stretched out of sight, while down the open road, left clear before the hearse, went nothing but a few dead leaves, just blown from the gardens, whirling and eddying along as the chill wind drove them. Following the hearse, on foot, came the University officials, the Principal and the professors, in their robes, with the mace borne before them, and now, before the slowly-moving hearse had passed beyond my sight, I saw, under the wreaths on the coffin, the gleam of a scarlet hood.

Who could it be?

I looked among the ranks of the 'Varsity men, but there were too many of them for me to see all.

I leant forward and touched a man who stood crushed almost against the wheel of my cab.

'Whose funeral is this?'

'A dinna ken. A blocks the road fine. A canna get hame tae dinner'—and he pulled out a short clay and began to light up for consolation.

The 'Varsity people had passed, and the city authorities followed in their robes—Lord Provost, town councillors, baillies and other officials, with representatives of learned societies, and then the long string of mourning carriages, behind which the crowd surged and broke and went about the business of the day.

My cab pressed through the people and came away, the driver eager to get rid of me and look for another fare. I sat looking at the heather that peeped out of my creel, and thinking how much I would prefer a quiet grave where that had

grown, and my friends to bear me to it, rather than the pomp and ugliness that I had just seen.

Still thinking this, I got out at our door, and nodded to one of our men who was just going by.

'Whose big funeral was that I saw?' I asked, paying the cabman as I spoke.

When I turned, the man was still staring at me.

'Where on earth do you come from?' he asked.

'West Coast,' I answered. 'Why?'

'Man!' he gasped. 'Do you mean to tell me you didn't know Grosvenor was dead?'

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### SAID WORD IS THRALL

I stood and looked at the man without finding a word to say. Grosvenor dead! And the world still going on! I leant against the wall and stared silently about me. Grosvenor dead!

Presently I felt an arm hooked in mine, and found that the other man, a good-natured soul rejoicing in the name of Brown, was trying to lead me into the house.

'What's wrong?' I asked, trying in a half-hearted sort of way to free myself.

'Don't you worry!' he returned. 'I'll see to you. I'd no idea you'd take the thing like that.'

I was going to ask him angrily what he meant, but as I looked up, I caught sight of my own face in a mirror which we were passing. It was so pale and miserable that I resisted no more, but let him take me into his own room, which was nearer than mine, and there I sat down on the bed, feeling as if I were in a dream.

This didn't please Brown, however, and he made me put my feet up, and covered me with his rug before fetching out his whisky, of which I drank some.

'Better?' he asked presently, patting me on the shoulder in a friendly way.

'Rather!' I answered. 'I didn't know I was such a fool,' and I tried to sit up, but he pressed me down again.

'Just you lie quiet. You're as well there as anywhere else for ten minutes, I guess. You're shaky yet.'

I yawned and lay quiet for a little, while Brown sat on the bed by me, and put the glass to my lips again.

'That's enough,' I said at last. 'It's too early in the day for that sort of thing. What an ass I am! But I hadn't heard a word of it. I didn't think anything would knock me so silly, though.'

'Ay, I remember,' Brown answered. 'You left no address, or someone might have been writing to you. (There's a heap of letters for you downstairs, by-the-bye). It's been in all the papers too.'

I shut my eyes again and lay thinking of the man, of his faults, and his many good points. I was thankful I had said little or nothing in reply to his taunts and abuse the last time we met. He must have been insane, I thought; and then as I pulled myself together again, I suddenly recollected that I didn't even know the cause of his death.

'How did it happen?'

'Ah! I leave you medical Johnnies to settle that,' Brown said, nodding his head with an air of mystery. 'Something went badly wrong that evening.'

'What evening? Tell me all you know.'

'Oh, I know as much as any outsider. I saw it all. It was the evening after you left, don't you know? No, of course you don't! Well, I was going along the street and met Muir. Queer chap, Muir! May be clever. Thinks so, anyway. Always seems best pleased when a chap makes a fool of himself, don't you think?'

'Go on,' I said.

'All right, old man, lots of time. I'm not a blooming magazine special reporter. You must hear it my way, if I'm to tell you. Well, Muir stopped, and asked me with that nasty laugh of his—always laughs as if he were saying "You're a fool, anyway"—he asked me if I was coming in to hear Grosvenor's latest.'

'“What is it?” I asked him, for poor old Grosvenor was always funny, don't you know? even if you couldn't follow him. Don't you think so, Tree?'

'I've forgotten the funny side now. Go on.'

'Well, just then, up comes Grosvenor, flying along with his hat on the back of his head, and a couple of reporters trying

to keep pace with him, and he begins shouting at us before we can hear him. As he passed, "We're late, we're late!" he says. "Come along in, boys; come along, Brown!" and he caught me by the arm and pulled me along, dictating to the reporters as we went.'

'Heavens! What was he dictating?'

'The Lord knows; I don't. He was muttering too fast for me. I don't know your scientific words either. Besides, when he caught hold of me, of course a reporter was shoved out of the way. He was mad! He kept edging across me as we went, to hear what Grosvenor said, and I kicked him once or twice. I couldn't help it. Grosvenor held on to me all the time, and talked nineteen to the dozen, right away up to the lecture-room door!'

'But what was he saying? You know if he talked sense, anyhow.'

'Not I! I heard words like development, evolution, psychosis, new era, and so on, but I couldn't put them together, not if'—he looked round, searching for an idea—'not if you made me drink that bottle of whisky I couldn't.'

'Go on.'

'Well, ain't I going on all the time? When we got to the door Grosvenor tried to shove me in before him, but I had a chance to speak. "I've no ticket," I told him, but he just shouted, "Free, dear boy, free to all!" and I went in with the crowd.'

'Who was there?'

'Oh, everybody, my dear man, everybody. I couldn't tell you all, for the place was so packed I couldn't get a seat, and where I stood there was a crowd round me.'

'Well?'

'Well, you know what a big fellow he is—was, I mean! He just seemed to fill the platform. There was a stir all over the place when he came in, and a lot of stamping and clapping. I tell you he just drank it in like wine, but he never said a word; only went to the blackboard and covered it with things—queer figures, you know, triangles and circles mixed, and parallel lines, and then something that looked like Greek words, or may be Hebrew; I don't know them one from t'other. When he'd covered one board he just went to another, and while he drew and scribbled, one by one the people stopped whispering, until

at last you could hear nothing at all but the sound of the chalk on the blackboard.'

'Go on, man. Hurry! What happened?'

'Well, at last he stopped scribbling, and came forward to the edge of the platform. Then he began to talk, but at first I couldn't hear what he said, partly because one never could, and partly because Clegg got in front of me.'

'Clegg!' I said, starting up. 'You never spoke of him. I didn't know he was in town.'

'Ah, but he is, though. He was standing just by me, and because he moved to the front I lost Grosvenor's first words. Lie down, or I won't go on.'

I lay down and groaned in my impatience.

'Well, what then?'

'Oh, presently I pulled Clegg back a bit, so that I could see Grosvenor, and then I could make out something of what he said. He talked a lot of rot about ascending spirals, and widening circles, mixing them up with the Tree of Knowledge and the wisdom of the Egyptians. Then he got on to the Higher Education of Women and the raising of the masses. Precious lot most of them cared about these things; but everyone saw there was something more coming, and so there was, but not what they expected.' •

Good-natured as he was, Brown was feeling the power of the story-teller for the first time, and must stop now and again to enjoy it.

'Not what they expected,' he repeated slowly, and then went on: 'So Grosvenor asked them what all this meant. Didn't it mean knowledge and nothing more? Hadn't we all powers in us, which sometimes we knew, and generally we didn't know—powers which meant strength? Strength to get knowledge and riches and happy lives, if only we would learn; and looking around me, I could see the people gaping like a lot of young birds, waiting to have learning crammed down their throats. "Ay," he went on, "if only you would learn—and you shall! Listen," and he looked at a water-bottle and a tumbler that stood before him, "I will pour learning into you as easily as I pour water into this glass. I'm afraid," he said, "I may be accused of telling you a secret, but"—and he laughed and lifted up the water-bottle, and looking all around at us, tried to pour out some water—and he couldn't. The bottle



slipped from his fingers, smashed on the floor, and the water ran across and trickled over the edge of the platform, while he stood and watched it. Presently someone began to giggle, and he looked the way the laugh came from, and opened his mouth, but it closed without his having said a word. Then he stood, and seemed to think it over for a bit, while a woman near me began to whimper softly, and at last he went to the blackboard and cleaned it, for he'd covered it all over with things, don't you know? But I saw, when he'd cleaned it, he couldn't hold the chalk, and had to pick it up at last in his left hand, and all he could write was the same four words over and over again.'

'What were they?'

'"Said word is thrall." Means, your word's as good as your bond, doesn't it? He wrote it all over the board, and then rubbed it out, always with his left hand, and wrote it again. He seemed vexed with himself and wanting to write something else, but he couldn't, and at last he took to drawing a face and a sign, always the same face and the same sign, and always with his left hand, you know, till they led him away. He did it jolly well, too.'

'What were these things like?' I asked. But Brown shook his head.

'Don't ask me. It was an ugly sort of face—the sign, or whatever it was, was too small for me to see.'

'What happened after that?'

'Oh, another man who was standing near me, Dr. Howell they said he was, went up and took him off. Later he came back, and told us that Grosvenor had a sort of stroke and couldn't go on. After that he got worse every day, so the papers said, until the end. He died only four days ago, but he'd never spoken a word, I was told, since it began. Once or twice he tried to write, but he's always written the same thing, and at last he wouldn't try any more.'

'Thanks very much!' I said. 'I'm all right again now. Do you know where Clegg is?'

'He's just in and out all day. I don't think he's in just now. Shall I see?'

'No, thanks, I'll see him later. How did he take this?'

'Well, he seemed more frightened than anyone just at the time. He was pushing forward to get at Grosvenor when Howell took him away. After that he stood staring about and

muttering to himself until Howell came back and told us what was wrong. He got better then.'

I got up to leave the room.

'Many thanks for looking after me, Brown. I'll get my letters and see to them quietly in my room, I think.'

'I'll get them for you, old man. You needn't go downstairs again.' And off Brown went, coming back with a pile of letters and papers, which I took to my room.

I didn't look at them, however, though I was feeling all right again. I got my pipe, and sat down in my easy-chair to have a smoke and think things out a little. It seemed to me that there was no possible excuse for looking upon this last tragedy as being anything but an example of the stern justice of Nature, of whom poor Grosvenor had been very fond of talking. We are built to do a certain amount of work, to stand a certain strain, and no more. He had broken most of Nature's laws, I knew, one time and another, and he had been broken in his turn. That was all. And yet I lay there trying to make more out of what was quite bad enough. He had lived an excited, overworked life, and with the added strain of what he believed to be a tremendous discovery, hemiplegia had suddenly resulted—a blood-vessel in the brain had broken, and there was an end of it all. It had been foreshadowed, too. He could not have been in a healthy state when I saw him the night before; and could one say that the trouble began even then? It was impossible to tell when he had ceased to be responsible for what he was doing. His busy brain was resting now, anyway, and with that thought I turned to my correspondence, throwing the matter aside, for the time at least.

But my letters, after all, did not take very long. Some were quarterly bills, some were advertisements sent to me because I was a full-fledged M.B. now, and other letters, by being left so long, had answered themselves. The pleasantest was from George Turnbull, telling me to bring Clegg for a day at the birds before they got too wild. I finished looking at them all and then grew restless again.

Where was Clegg, I wondered, and if he had come in, why didn't he come up to see me as usual?

I picked up a new book and tried to read it, but threw it down again, and went to his room, to find it empty. By this time it was growing late in the afternoon, and I thought I should like a cup of tea. I went to the common room for

it, and found Clegg there alone. The manner in which he met me was so different from what it used to be, that I noticed the change at once. No doubt my manner changed too, but I tried to be the same as usual, and told him of Turnbull's repeated invitation, which we arranged to accept for three days hence if it suited Turnbull and his wife. Then, because it would have seemed so unnatural not to speak of Grosvenor's death, I spoke of it, but Clegg would not talk much. He asked what Brown had told me, and then said that he knew nothing more. His manner altogether was so different, so guarded, that I got up from the sofa soon, and said I would have a walk before dinner. Three months ago he would have gone to fetch his hat without further invitation, but now he only nodded, picking up a newspaper as he did so, and after waiting a moment, I went away alone, feeling very dreary. When I got outside I didn't know what to do with myself. I wanted company for an hour, but I didn't know where to get it since Clegg wouldn't give me his. All the houses at which I might have cared to call would be empty for another week probably, and I wondered where to go.

While I wondered, I wandered on, and presently found myself going by the lecture-rooms.

The janitor was lounging by the gateway, and I crossed the road to speak, for he was an old acquaintance of mine.

'Holidays soon over now, Pat.'

'Yis, Mr. Tregenna, sorr—dochter I do mane. Where have ye spint them, thin, dochtor?'

'West Coast, Pat. I was out of everything there. I never heard what happened here until to-day.'

'Ay, I saw yez comin' out o' the station. 'Twas in the percession I was, an' a mighty big wan it was too.'

'I saw you there,' I said, 'but I never guessed who was in the coffin. Were you in the room when it happened?'

'At the door on account o' the crowd, sorr, an' may I nivir see such a pitiful sight agin, before I go to glory, as him scribblin' on th' board. I've not had the heart to rub it clane yit. I'm thinkin' I'll get some poor divil in to do it for me, for the sake of a sixpence.'

'Not clean yet! I'd give a shilling to see that board!'

In another minute I stood alone in the lecture theatre, Pat having asked me to excuse him.

The blinds were drawn, and when I pulled up one of them

the desks showed dusty where the light fell. As I walked, the place echoed to my tread, and I fell into as quiet a step as I could manage.

If a voice had called to hush me from the empty seats or from the platform I could scarcely have felt surprised. When I got by the blackboard I found that I must go back and raise another blind, the light was so bad ; but after I had done that I could see all that I wanted, I had almost said all that I expected.

'Said word is thrall' straggled large over the board, and here and there the faintest sketch of a face. It was probably an untrustworthy imagination which made me think that in the face I saw something that had haunted me before, but of the sign that was dotted idly here and there I could have no doubt. It was cruciform.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### IN THE DISSECTING-ROOM

I WENT out into the street again, scarcely knowing what I did, and gave his shilling to Pat without a word.

Then I looked at my watch, and finding I had still an hour before dinner, I walked steadily, racking my brain to know what I should do next. I crossed the meadows and reached Blackford Hill before deciding, and then found it was so late that I had to run steadily back to be in time for dinner. This did me good, and I had not been West for a month for nothing. I plucked up courage as I ran, and set my teeth against any idea of failure. Until I saw further into the matter myself, I would take no one into my confidence, and I felt the mad excitement that a man might have in fighting an armed and unknown enemy in the dark.

I went into the dining-room flushed and determined, and with some sort of grim satisfaction. I was going to take one step at any rate toward helping the affair to a conclusion, and I felt almost light-hearted in consequence, although I was very well aware that I ran some risks.

The men were drifting back now. October had just begun, and the medicals among them had come up to get a start of a

few days in the infirmary and dissecting-room before the winter session began.

Several of the men had only come back that afternoon, and there were nods and hand-shakes all round the table, the beginning and end of vacation being about the only times that undergraduates, so far as I remember, go through the latter formality.

At first everybody talked of the vac., and the ways it had been spent, but presently the latest arrival, looking round the table, spoke :

‘Hullo ! Where’s Reid ?’

There was a moment’s dead silence, in which Clegg’s startled eyes met mine defiantly, and then both Reid’s death and Grosvenor’s were talked of, while those who had newly come back listened, and asked eager questions in lowered tones.

I took little part in all this, and Clegg, I saw, did the same. Now and then I had to answer, in some way, a question put directly to me, but I volunteered nothing, and was glad when we had finished dinner. I had almost decided to go straight to my room and do without my coffee for the sake of peace, but the watchful MacDougall caught me by the arm, on the stair, and took me in with him.

‘I’ve been wanting to see you for ever so long, Tree. I didn’t know where to write to you, or anything else about you. We must get to work at once, man ! Why, the session begins next week !’

‘What then ?’

‘What then ! We must have the “Antiseptic” out then, of course. Every man in the place shall have a copy when he matriculates.’

‘So you’re still going to let the profs. have it !’

‘Let them have it ! By gad, yes ! Do you know that the beggars even refused me a Special ?’

‘You don’t say so !’ I answered sympathetically.

‘Yes, they did. They shall be sorry they kept me up here before I’ve done with them, you bet !’

‘Well, I’m afraid I can’t help you, Mac. I’ve got a lot of special work on.’

‘Oh, nonsense ! I’ve been keeping the thing back to get your help. You aren’t going to be one of those beggars who stick up for the profs. directly they’ve done with them, are you ?’

'Not at all. But I tell you I've got work on. I must earn bread and cheese somehow.'

'Well, I tell you this thing is going to pay, and you'll get pocket-money in that way, just when you're too tired to do other work. Look here! Four thousand copies once a week at a penny. If it goes well we'll have it twice a week—say eight thousand pence divided among four, that's eight pounds six and eightpence a week each. What do you think of that, my boy?'

'Good heavens! Where do your four thousand copies go, to start with?'

'There are over four thousand students, aren't there? and that's allowing none for the profs., and the outside public.'

'Oh, the profs. are going to buy it, are they?'

'Rather! Why, there'll be a skit on one of them every week (we thought you'd write it, Tree), and a caricature too. Each prof. will have his turn and enjoy seeing the others slated. Now you'll join us, won't you?'

• 'I tell you I can't,' I said savagely, putting down my empty cup with a clatter. 'I've much more important things to do.'

'What! Not even come to our first editorial meeting to-morrow night and talk it over?'

This made me hesitate. I meant to be doing something very different to-morrow night if I could, but that might be the very best reason for joining this. If there was any fuss later on, no one would suppose that a man who could waste time at such work would do anything much else on the same night.

'Well, I'll see,' I said. 'To-morrow night, is it?'

'Yes, at eight o'clock, in my room. Don't you forget it.' And MacDougall, having gained his point, went off, as he said, for 'copy.'

I was so little interested in what he told me that I didn't think it worth while to ask him about the expenses of the expected four thousand copies.

I looked about me quietly, to see what was going on in the room. Some of the men were telling one another stories of their holiday doings.

'Fifteen shots,' I tell you,' one little man was saying to three others, as he balanced himself on the edge of the fender. 'Fifteen shots and seventeen birds. Some flukes, of course, I own that; but pretty good shooting, wasn't it?'

'Splendid !' chorused the three, looking at one another. Then one suggested :

'Right and left each time, of course? Thirty barrels that would be.'

'Not at all—not a bit of it. Fifteen barrels, my dear fellow, if you like to put it that way, and seventeen birds. Three got in a line, y'know.'

'Three got in a line !' they chorused gravely.

'And oh, I forgot the rabbit. There was a rabbit too, but I didn't count him. I'm bound to say I was lucky twice. But most of 'em were at about forty yards.'

He got off the fender and went for some more coffee, while the three winked at one another in silence, and waited for more.

In another place two medicals, who would begin their final year next week, were discussing Grosvenor's death and hotly disputing the seat of the injury, working it out upon a plaster cast of a brain which they held, while Clegg, stretched out in a hammock chair, with the evening newspaper, watched them in silence.

I didn't like the way he had got into lately of watching people when he thought they weren't looking at him. He seemed to be always suspicious, always expecting something to happen. I was irritated with him for this, and watched him angrily, until suddenly I realised that I was really doing exactly what I was blaming him for. So much was I struck by this that I actually looked quickly round the room, to see if I, in my turn, was being watched, but no one was paying any attention to me.

The little man had got back to the fender, and was telling a tall story about a salmon that he had dived for after breaking his rod, and the three others listened as respectfully as ever. He was a new man, and I wondered whether he'd stay long enough to get that sort of thing knocked out of him.

The two men with the brain had got their Foster, and Landois and Sterling, and other text-books, and were still hard at it, while Clegg still watched them. The rest of the fellows in the room were lounging by the window, and I think no one noticed me as I went out.

I passed up the stair to my room ; for, though I had an errand in the town that night, I thought it not late enough yet to set about it. So I sat at my window, and looking north-west,

saw the stars come out, and wished I was in the country again. After half an hour I moved, and passing down the stair, without meeting anyone, went quietly away.

In my earlier student days, which seemed such a long way off already, I had worked at my anatomy in dissecting-rooms near by. There, under the cheery guidance of a man who has now a more dignified post, I got the knowledge necessary for the second professional. There, also, I became acquainted with Tom, the dissecting-room porter, of whom I may speak with freedom, since he long ago was also moved to another place, though whether higher or lower I can't say.

Tom was a pale-faced, elderly man, whose appearance suggested that, a porter being needed, a corpse had been galvanised to do the very rough work necessary in such a situation. At five o'clock he would clear out any remaining students, and, shutting the doors, go somewhere, no one could ever tell me where, any more than they could say what his last name was, or whether he had one. But he seemed more at home in the dissecting-rooms or in the vaults underneath them than anywhere else; for, later in the evening, one was almost sure to find that the door was on the latch, and if, being used to such things, one went in quietly and searched about in the shadows, one would find Tom seated among the corpses (from which he differed so very little) and doing some odd job, not because it was pressing, but because this was the most congenial place and occupation. Here he drove bargains with hard-working students, for bones and other things to take to their rooms and study at their ease, and here I searched for him and found him that night.

He was a morose and silent man, and although he had not seen me for eighteen months, and must have wondered what brought me, he merely gave a grunt and a nod towards an old chair that stood near, without stopping his gruesome work.

I sat and watched him at it for some minutes without saying anything to the purpose. There was no special hurry. I had shut the door as I came in, to keep out unexpected visitors, and somehow Tom himself, and the other ghastly occupiers of the basement room where I sat, seemed, without saying anything, to suggest that hurry was not of much use anyway. So I formed my plans and spoke very little, while he did no more than nod, until, knowing just what I wanted to say, I said it, leaning forward and muttering it in Tom's ear,



while he listened silently, and something that lay between him and me seemed to listen silently too.

If I had expected that what I had to say would make any sensation in that place, I was disappointed. Neither Tom nor anything else showed any surprise. I listened to every footstep on the pavement overhead, and started from my chair when a door banged, but nobody else moved, even to wink.

At last Tom spoke, and although he said very little, it was very much to the point. He doubled the amount of a sum of money that I had mentioned, and went silently about his work until I said that I agreed to it.

Then, and not till then, he began to show interest in me. He dropped his business of the moment, which lay with a sly and ghastly smile, half in half out of the shadow, and he listened, leaning forward in the flickering candle-light, with his hands on his knees, while I went again over all the details of the matter in hand.

When I had finished he nodded again, once, twice, and I knew him well enough to be sure that the thing was settled so far as he was concerned. I rose and came away, therefore, being suddenly sickened of the place and of him, and he rose too, not putting on his coat, though it was perhaps ten o'clock, but taking up the candle and coming in his shirt-sleeves up the stair. At the top of the steps I made him drop the candle, for I had no mind to be noticed. He came to the door without it, therefore, as silent as ever, and nodded me good-bye, but, as I slipped away, a low call brought me back.

'What is it, Tom?' I asked impatiently.

'Twull be a gey auld corpse, I doot,' he said, and turning, went in and shut the door behind him.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### AN EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

AFTER this I wandered through the streets for an hour, and looked up a couple of acquaintances, but did not stay long with them. I couldn't chat and chaff that evening; I was absent-minded and dull, and I left, feeling that they must be glad to get rid of me. After that I went west, and, passing over the

Dean Bridge, stood before Grosvenor's house. There I stayed, looking in a fit of absent-mindedness up at his study window, where the blind was down and there was nothing whatever to see, until I was moved on by a policeman, who watched me more carefully than I cared for.

I turned back then, and, coming over the bridge again, listened as I went to the faint sound of the water on the stones far below. The place seemed to draw me to itself, and, if I had chosen, I could easily have let myself believe that the voices were calling to me.

After that I passed through the quiet streets homewards. As I went to my room, in passing Clegg's door, I saw by the light that he was still up. Then I recollected that I must speak to him again about George Turnbull's invitation, and, knocking at the door, went in. Even that little act of knocking reminded me how much we had changed toward one another lately. Three months ago neither of us would have thought of knocking at the other's door before going in, any more than he would have thought of knocking at his own.

I found him stretched out on a long chair with a medical text-book in his hand, but I don't think he was doing anything with it. He put it down and asked me to find a chair for myself.

'You'll find cigarettes on the mantelpiece, and whisky in the press, if you care for any,' he said, as if with a sort of attempt to be friendly.

'No, thanks ! At least I'll take a cigarette, if I may.'

I lit up, not because I wanted to smoke, for I didn't, but because that made it easier for me to stay for a few minutes, even if we didn't say much.

'I came in,' I explained, 'to tell you that I'm afraid I can't go over with you to the Turnbulls' just yet. I've some work to get through here first. But if you like to go over alone, I'm sure they'll be very glad.'

But Clegg shook his head.

'I don't care,' he said listlessly, and went on smoking.

'Very well, then. We'll go together a little later on, unless you think you're wanting a day or two off sooner. How are you ?'

'All right,' he said, and gave me no encouragement to talk more.

'I'll be off to bed, and send a line to Turnbull first,' I told him, when the silence began to make me feel awkward. 'Good-night !'

'Good-night,' he answered, and took up his book again so readily that I felt I was not wanted, and left the room.

Being in no mood for bed yet, although it was now after midnight, I sat down and wrote to George at once, thanking him, and saying that we meant to ask for a day with them a little later, but couldn't manage to get off just yet. This I took out to post at once, and then went to bed without doing anything more.

The next morning after breakfast I moved about in an aimless sort of way. I wanted the evening to come, and didn't feel as if I could settle to anything until then. I picked up a newspaper, and read for some minutes before noticing that it was a week old. Then I tried medicine, but found that I didn't know what I had read when I shut the book, so I went out. It was then about half-past ten, and I could hear, by the bugle-calls and the sharp words of command, that the garrison was mustered on the Castle esplanade.

I went that way, and stood watching them and waiting for the pipes, while the men numbered and formed fours, and marched and wheeled, to warm them and limber them up before they went down to drill in the Meadows. Then the band came down and played, while the lean, wiry colonel walked up and down with his hands behind his back, until the long-legged adjutant cantered up and saluted, when he swung himself into the saddle and, moving to the head of the column, while the pipes screamed before him and the drums thundered between the houses, led his men away down the Castle Hill.

It wasn't until the drums and pipes had begun to make the air throb that I noticed Clegg. He was standing with his head well up and his foot tapping time as they went past him, and he looked brighter and pluckier than I had seen him for some time. He nodded easily, too, when he saw me, and I was encouraged to stop and speak, instead of passing as I had intended.

'Wakes one up, doesn't it?' I said, nodding at the pipers, and he nodded back, watching them as they tramped by.

'Puts some pluck into one,' he said at last, as the music grew fainter, and nothing sounded near us now but the regular step of the rank and file as they moved past.

'I'd like to die fighting to that row,' he said presently. 'Twould make the thing easier, anyway—fighting or not.'

'I'd rather live fighting to it,' I said laughing. 'What

makes you look at it that way? Your liver isn't wrong, is it?'

He shook his head, and laughed a little too. Then, pulling out his watch, he found himself late for some appointment, while I, thrown back upon myself once more, strolled down the street. I went to the dissecting-rooms, where the more anxious among the men had already begun work, although it was nearly a week from the beginning of session. I wanted to see Tom, the porter, and a jerk of the head from him, as I passed, was enough to satisfy me for the time.

I didn't think it wise to come and go so quickly, so I took a turn round the room to see what was going on.

One knows very little of men at the University unless they belong to one's own year, and I saw no one in the place that I recognised except MacDougall.

His fiery head was bobbing about all over the place, and wherever he went he seemed to make a little stir among the men to whom he spoke.

Presently he came near me, and began talking to a group of four who hadn't warmed to their work at all yet, and were idling about in a very half-hearted sort of way.

They talked together for a minute, and then he spoke more loudly:

'Perhaps Dr. Tregenna will know. I'll ask him.'

The others turned to me, and I fervently hoped that I was not going to be disgraced by being made to show my ignorance of some abstruse point in anatomy, but when MacDougall spoke again, I moved towards them.

'What is it you want to know?' I said. 'Remember, one soon gets rusty.'

'Oh, it's none of this stuff,' MacDougall answered briskly.

'I'm asking these fellows if it's true what I hear about a new Varsity mag. Do you know?'

'What have you heard?' I asked, trying to look interested.

'Well, I heard, privately, you know, from a man who's mixed up in it, that they're going to have a regular scorcher of a new mag.'

'Really?'

'Yes, the thing's being kept awfully dark. They say it would never come out if the profs. got to hear of it.'

'Deuce of a lot the profs. care!' one of the other men said.

Mac looked at the speaker with contempt.

'They'll care this time. They'll just be squirming in another week.'

'There's no one here can write,' the same man said.

'Oh ! Isn't there ? Mind you, I don't know much about it, but if what I hear's true, Edinburgh'll be made to sit up, and the profs. too.'

'Who's on it ?'

'How can I tell ? But I'll tell you what I know. There's no doubt about it that the "oof" is there, and they do say—but I'm not sure about that, it may be just a frost, you know.'

'What's a frost ?'

'Well, you can take it for what it's worth, but it's being said that one of the profs., I needn't say which, had a jolly old row with the rest of the Senatus last meeting, and means to get his knife into them.'

'How's the fool going to do that ?'

'Paying good men, of course, to write for him. Men like Barrie and Crockett. They're both old students, y'know. But there's Sinclair ; perhaps he'll know.' And off went Mac to mystify another man who had just come into the room.

'Wonder if it's true !' one of the quartette said. 'There's a lot of good men must have a bone to pick with the profs. if you think of it.'

'Maybe. There's lots of fun to be got out of 'em, if the chaps on the thing aren't going to be examined by them afterwards.'

'I saw old Richie coming out of last meeting of Senatus looking like a thunder-cloud,' chimed in a third man.

'It doesn't take much to do that,' replied the first. 'Anyhow we can get the first number to see. It won't be deadly, I s'pose. Here, Traquair, it's your turn. Tell me the boundaries of the anterior triangle, and let's get quit of it. I don't believe it pays to come up early, after all. I'm not sure if I'll be here to-morrow, you fellows, if it's fine.'

They got to work again, and I came away without waiting to compliment MacDougall on his ingenious advertising, which he was still carrying on at another table.

'That was all I did before lunch. In the afternoon a drizzling rain set in, but I was quite satisfied. I made three short calls on the South Side, and being near the cemetery, walked through it, past Grosvenor's grave. It was in a quiet

corner, some distance off the path, and on the other side of the wall at that point was nothing but a grass field. The flowers on the grave were already withered, all except one mass which I saw gleaming from a distance, and wondered at, since I thought it must have been put there by some mourner that day, but, when I went to look at it more closely, I found it was only a tin wreath. This was the most lasting tribute to a man who professed, above all things, to be in touch with nature—and as I came away, I saw that it must have been bought in a shop close by the gates, where there were dozens like it at a couple of shillings each.

The sky was so clouded that it was almost dark before dinner. The moon was growing toward the full, but it promised to rain steadily through the night. The gutters already ran with steady little streams, and I splashed back through mud and puddle to dinner.

The fire and the lights in the dining-room looked the warmer and the brighter for the outside dirt and discomfort, and everyone seemed the more lively. All through dinner there was a running fire of chaff kept up, mostly at MacDougall's expense, for he was so well pleased with himself, and so restless, that everyone had a shot at him. He took it all quite cheerfully, however; only once or twice I saw his eyes fixed upon a tormentor in a way that made me think he would have his revenge, if only the 'Antiseptic' lasted long enough.

Soon after dinner, when I had arranged some of my own affairs, I went to his room, and found that the others of the proposed staff had already come, and were preparing for a long *sederunt* by making themselves as comfortable as they could.

• After all, Mac had in him what I should think were some of the rudiments of a successful editor. He knew that his helpers were worthy of attention, and beer and whisky, baccy and cigarettes stood upon the table, so that our toils might be made as light as possible. It was much easier to sit quietly and listen to his proposals in an easy-chair, with something to smoke and to drink, than it would have been, say, in the class-room where the recognised 'Varsity magazine was put together with no such aids to reflection. Besides MacDougall and myself, there were three other men there. Muir I have already spoken of several times, and

he sat looking as contemptuous as ever of everything around him.

The second man was a little fellow as fiery-headed as Mac, and with as restless a body and mind, but with an amount of wild fun in him which Mac never pretended to. He was a Divinity student then, and has long since sobered down into a greatly and deservedly respected 'meenister,' whose only dissipation (always decorous) is when he meets old college friends at our annual dinner. At that time, however, no trick was too mad for him, provided it was not vicious, and his chief joy just then was to encourage in the mind of his most dignified teacher the belief, for which he provided much evidence, that he was an absolute lunatic.

He was telling of his latest freak when I went into the room, and had no idea of stopping because of me, but went on in the broad Scotch which he always dropped into when excited :

'I gie'd him a fricht the morn ! Soon as he shut his een afore lecture, I up an' stood at his desk, and afore he blinkit, I'd pit oot a wheen wee wormies on it. Losh ! laddies, when he lookit, there I stood tracin' one ower the desk wi' ma finger eend. Ne'er a word' did he say, an' I nae mair, but at last "Puir laddie !" says he—an' that's a'. I doot I'll do it nae mair !'

The last man was a fellow known by all his friends as an incurable caricaturist. He lay back, looking half asleep, with the most innocent expression possible, but looking quietly over his shoulder, I saw that he had already begun to outline MacDougall as an Irish bull, charging full tilt against a brick wall, marked *Senatus*. This was the material from which MacDougall proposed to form the committee that was to make the University reform its ways, and he now proceeded, after seeing that our glasses were filled, to tell us how he proposed to do it.

## CHAPTER XL

### RESURRECTIONISTS

'Now, you fellows, if you'll settle down, we'll start to work. Here's scribbling paper and pencils for you to make notes as we go on. You all know what we're going to do and why we're going to do it.'

'You're mad with the profs. because you got spun in your second,' Weir, the other red-headed man, answered promptly, 'and you want us to help you in giving 'em what-for.'

'Nonsense! Of course they set my back up, but it's the general principle I'm kicking at—not my case.'

Muir laughed sarcastically.

'Here's a subject for you, Bain.' (Bain was our artist). 'MacDougall is going to act Don Quixote and tilt against general principles.'

Mac took no notice of this, but went on :

'We've just got to make those beggars know their places, and keep to them.'

'How's it to be done?'

'We must make 'em feel the whip. Here's Tree'll take one a week and say what he thinks of him, and just drop a hint that there's more to be said if it's needed.'

'I never promised,' I said. 'I'm not up to that sort of thing.'

'Rot! We all know you can lay it on when you like. And of course you keep the copyright, so that you can publish your sketches in book form afterwards and make pots of money.'

'Thanks awfully!' I said. 'I'm glad I may keep the copyright.'

'Look here,' Mac went on. 'I've got a title for you to write up to: "These Pleasing Profs." Alliteration pays, don't you know. Or "Profs. and their Practices," or "Profs. in the Pillory," or, "The Prof's. Progress." I've got a dozen of 'em here, all alliterative. You can take which you like.'

'Thanks again!' I said. 'Why not write the articles? I'm sure you'd do it better than I.'

'Too much on hand,' said Mac gravely; 'but I'll give you tips. Now, Muir, you'll write our first editorial. Make it as hot as you like. There isn't a blooming prof. in the place worth his salt. Kick 'em all hard!'

'Does anyone know the law of libel?' I asked.

'Who's going to prosecute?' returned Mac hotly. 'They squeeze all our coin out of us in fees. There's nothing left for damages. Besides, an action would run up our circulation at once. Now, the next thing is notes on news—I'll do them. I'm more about the 'Varsity than the rest of you. Here's the



sort of thing: "Professor C—— lectured on 'Truth and Immortality' yesterday. Does he expect to meet A—— in a future existence?"

'Who on earth is A——?'

'I don't know, and no one else does. But they'll all want to. If it came to a row, I'd say Ananias, of course, and plead that I thought an action might lie against me if I gave the name in full.'

'An action by whom? Ananias?'

'Yes, if they like. Now, here's another.'

"We do not believe the report that Mrs. B—— has gone to Baden because of Professor B——'s behaviour. That, at any rate, has not been proved as yet"—and so on.'

'But what if B—— wants to horsewhip you for spreading such a report?'

'Man! we aren't doing any such thing! We're contradicting it, of course! Then we'll have a prize competition. What shall it be?'

'The date that the MacEwan Hall is opened,' I suggested.

'The number of times that Baird gives the names of titled patients this winter,' Muir put in.

'The number of times that Douglas threatens to leave the theatre in this session's lectures,' Weir said.

'Well, think about that, all of you, this week, and bring your notions to next meeting,' Mac told us encouragingly. 'Weir, you've got to bring six good jokes—and don't crib 'em. And oh! I want a man taken off and slated well. He must be someone everybody knows. Will you make a scarecrow of yourself? Bain'll do a picture of you.'

Bain and Weir chuckled knowingly at one another, and promised they'd do their best, and Bain at once began to sketch Weir in a strait waistcoat, marked "Dangerous."

'Now, there's a poem wanted every week, and you've got to do that, Tree.'

'Never wrote a poem in my life,' I said.

'Dash, I forgot! You call 'em verses, don't you? I believe you think them as good as the other men's poems, though. No, don't get in a wax, I didn't mean that! What did I say? I meant, anyway, that I think them as good as other men's poems—a jolly lot better, in fact—and so do the other men. Don't you, you chaps?'

'Rather!' was the polite chorus, and Mac went on en-

courageously. 'Don't write over our heads, y'know, that's all. Come down to the level of the men who'll read it. Now, if you could do a spicy serenade for Lottie Collins—she'll be here next week—we'd get her photo and put in with it. That'd fetch 'em !'

I tried to explain that I had never seen the celebrated lady referred to, but it was no use.

'Get her photo, and read a few newspaper Johnnies on the performance,' Mac answered ; 'and you can do an ode to a prof. as well, if you want to ease your mind afterwards, and put in something classic. Be stiff with 'em, mind ! Now the work's all cut out, and we'll bring it to the next meeting here on Wednesday, to revise and correct. We'll bring it out on the Monday and just shake the profs. in their chairs to start with.'

'What about the expenses ?' one of us asked.

'Oh, I'm responsible. I've got it on tick for three numbers, and then the money'll be coming in. I've got a lot of strings to my bow that I haven't told you chaps of to-night. You'll hear more next meeting. Now, fill your glasses all round, and here's to the "Antiseptic" and no heel-taps !'

We drank the toast with much show of enthusiasm, for I believe we all agreed that we were likely to get some fun out of these meetings, though probably nothing else except bills. Then those of us who had let their pipes go out lit up again, and we chatted over details of our programme, while Bain's pencil worked busily all the time.

I can't have seemed so cheerful to Bain as I thought I was, for, on his passing the sketch-book round for inspection, I found that he had dressed me in the usual black costume Hamlet wears, with a big black plume, and holding a skull.

As MacDougall saw it he banged his fist on the table savagely.

'What a fool I am ! Why, we want an obituary notice of Grosvenor !'

We looked at one another in surprise.

'What makes you think of that now ?' I asked, not altogether pleased at this turn in the conversation.

'Look at this !'—and he held up Bain's sketch—"Alas, poor Yorick !" and you're the man to do it, Tree.'

'I can't and I won't,' I said shortly. 'I'll give you a start with your first number, just to set the thing going, but I won't do this.'

'Well, well, don't get shirty over it. I dare say I can do it better. You won't throw yourself into the style of the thing, you know. You'd be too dashed critical. Now, my line will be "*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*," and all that sort of talk. Stop a minute, will you—for I had emptied my glass and was moving,—'just half a minute, and I'll show you the style. "A gloom has been cast over University circles by the death of a much-loved teacher——"'

'Was he much loved?' interrupted Bain, sharpening his pencil.

'Of course he was! Isn't he dead? Well, that settles it. Where was I? Oh, "much loved teacher. The manly, straightforward ways of the late professor——"'

'I say,' Weir put in, 'I don't want to be nasty, but *was* he straightforward? Seems to me I've heard funny stories from fellows he's humbugged! If you put in too much, they'll think ~~we're~~ <sup>we're</sup> humbugging too, and, after all, the man's dead.'

'Oh, shut up, do! Or will you write it? I didn't say he *was* straightforward. I said he had straightforward *ways*. Grosvenor himself would see the difference at once—"late professor endeared him to many" (you won't let me say *all*, I suppose). "It is not for us to speak of his achievements. That we must leave to his peers, but he was known and appreciated far outside our University——"'

'Most highly appreciated by those farthest off,' Muir remarked.

"And Fame places upon his grave her wreath of immortelles."

'Is it a tin one?' I asked, quite involuntarily, and was startled into my senses by the stamping that greeted this supposed attempt at wit.

'Didn't I tell you he'd give it 'em?' asked MacDougall, looking round him. 'There's point for you! Take Richie first, Tree; he's a medical, and I know he's a favourite of yours too. You'll make them sorry for themselves, I know you will.'

'I didn't mean to be funny,' I said, 'I was thinking about something else.'

'All right, old fellow! If you're like that when you don't think, what'll you be when you do?' And Mac, who evidently wanted to put us all on good terms with ourselves and with him, let me get away, with the prophecy that I

should soon be called from the staff of the 'Antiseptic' to work on some more famous journal.

As I left, they were composing an article which began—'Threats and entreaties have been in vain! Those who tread on us have done their worst, but the "Antiseptic" survives.'

I went up the stair to my room, and, having turned on the light, looked at my watch again. It was a little after twelve. I pressed my face against the window and looked out into the darkness. It was raining still, a steady drizzle. The windows were covered with it, and I could hear the water dripping monotonously from the eaves. I threw the sash up, and the chilly, damp night air crept into the room, filling it with an autumnal smell of dead leaves. I pulled the sash down again and got ready to go out. I put on an old and dark suit, a thick pea-jacket, and a deerstalker cap that came over my ears. I turned up the collar of my pea-jacket, and at the last moment slipped a little revolver into my pocket. It was not a very dangerous looking thing, but I thought it enough to frighten people at a short distance, and, having turned out my lamp and locked my door—putting the key into my pocket so that no one should get in and find that I was away—I went quietly down the stair.

I passed MacDougall's room, where the editorial committee still sat, and heard Mac say 'I'll get Tree to do that' as I passed. Hoping he wouldn't come to my room for anything that night, I slipped quietly on. Down in the dining-room the light still burnt, and I heard one man say to another, shaking his coat as he spoke, 'It's as dark as pitch outside,' and, glad to hear it, I went softly to the door, and, passing out, used my latchkey to close it without noise behind me.

The rain fell with a soft, continuous, whispering sound, and the streets were practically empty. A policeman was standing at the street corner under the lamp, but the light was reflected on his wet oilskin cloak, and I crossed over before reaching him. A woman came slipshod from a doorway, muttering at my side, but I dropped a shilling on the pavement and left her searching for it, while I passed on quickly and was lost in the night.

I was leaving the houses now, and passed down the Middle Meadow Walk. Not a living thing did I see there, except a dripping cur that stole out from under the trees, and went back disconsolate, after sniffing at me as I went by.

On and on, between the houses again, and past the cemetery to the field that lay beyond it. There I waited a few minutes, listening intently, and then, satisfied that no one was watching me, I slipped over the fence on to the grass.

I went through the grass, and nearly fell over a sleeping horse before I reached the high wall that ran between the field and the cemetery. But I got to that at last, and followed it down to the corner, until I heard a sharp hiss just above my head. I was expecting it, but it startled me a little, nevertheless, and I hesitated a second or two before I answered.

Crouching a little, and getting the line of the wall against the sky, I could presently see that there was an unevenness just above me, which moved, and letting down an arm, touched me on the shoulder.

'It's a' richt ! Gie's yer hand ; we're doin' fine.'

Reaching up and catching him by the wrist, I scrambled on to the wall, beside Tom, the porter, who squatted there on the watch like a raven.

'We've been at it these twa 'oors,' he muttered in my ear. 'Three ithers an' mysel'. They'll be doon upon the corpse in a half 'oor, maybe.'

'Have you been disturbed?' I whispered.

'Deil a bit ! We're ower far frae the paths. Eh, man, but it's a braw nicht for the likes o' us an' sic ploys.'

'I'm glad you think so,' I said, shivering. 'I'd better stay here, I suppose, till it's ready?'

'Ay, you'll no' wait to be seen.'

'No. You're the only man I'm trusting in this job, Tom. And look here ! You can tell the fellows that there's a bottle of whisky waiting for you after it's done. But mind, I shall give it to you, and it's not to be drunk till you're indoors again, you remember that !'

'Ay, I'll mind,' and he slipped off the wall and disappeared.

I felt that the whisky bottle was unbroken by my scramble, and took a nip out of my own flask, settling myself down as comfortably as I could upon the wall to wait until I was fetched. There was very little fear of interruption, so far as I could see. It was not a night for anyone to be out, except such as had special business on hand, and although I did not know what arrangements, if any, were made for guarding the cemetery at night, I thought Tom could be depended on--and besides, as he had said, we were some way off the paths. At the same

time it was a ghastly business that I had come upon, and I wished it well over. I could only hear the faintest possible noise now and again, but presently there was a distinct thud, as if of a blow upon wood, and a few minutes later a creaking and a scuffle. Quarter of an hour, perhaps, later still I was startled at the sudden touch of a hand on my foot. I nearly shouted aloud, it was so sudden, but I bit my lip instead, in a way that showed marks hours after.

It was only Tom, and getting down as gently as I could, I followed him, stumbling among the graves and knocking against tombstones, until he told me to stand.

'The light now, quickly,' I said, and there was a fumbling which ended in a light being thrown first upon the open grave at my feet, and then wandering up to my face, which I covered quickly with my coat collar.

'Stop that,' I said. 'Take the light, Tom, and you others stand back.'

The three other men muttered, but moved away a little, while Tom took up the lantern.

'Now,' I said.

The light flickered here and there for a moment, and then settled on a spot close at my feet, while I knelt with my face in the shadow and looked at what lay before me.

It was an open coffin, from which the face of Grosvenor looked up, calmer and more peaceful than ever I had seen it during life. The face did not yet show any of the changes of decay, and its quiet gave a distinguished air which I had never seen at other times.

I knelt in the wet grass, looking at it for a while, and then, leaning forward, gently lifted the head a little from its pillow.

'A little nearer with the light,' I said softly, and looked again.

It was as I had expected, and there on the neck was what I had come to see—a cruciform mark.

## CHAPTER XLI

## WARNINGS

I LOOKED at this mark closely. It was dark red and well defined, reminding me very much of a nævus, or small tumour of blood-vessels, such as one fairly often meets with in very young children, and operates upon early.

There was nothing else to look for, and the sight of the rain falling upon that face troubled me.

I rose, and stepped back farther into the shadow.

'Keep the lantern, Tom, and tell these other fellows to come and put things straight again.'

'Wull ye no' gang?'

'No,' I said, 'I'm going to see him put back all right first.'

The other fellows came forward and put on the lid with as little noise as they could, pressing in the nails without hammering them, after which the coffin sank into the grave, never, I hope, to be disturbed again. They shovelled in the earth, three working together, and now feverishly anxious to have done with it. When it was half full I took Tom away a few paces.

'Will you be running any risk from these men if I leave you?'

'Na, na. Nae risk ava. I'm mair feared for you if ye let 'em glimpse ye.'

'They shan't do that! I'll slip away now. But if you get into trouble over this, you'll know where to find me. Here's the whisky and an extra five shillings for yourself. If anyone of those beggars wants to follow me, just tell them that I've a revolver in my pocket and shall be on the look-out for them.'

The lantern was out and I couldn't see Tom's face, but I found his hand and slipped into it, first the five shillings, then the bottle of whisky, and then the money arranged for. It was not my business how it would be divided or what profit he intended to make over the affair.

I told him to stay where he was for a few minutes, so that these others mightn't know when I went, and then, slipping quietly over the wall, I crossed the field again with a very much lighter heart, since I had only seen what I expected, and had managed to see it safely.

Reaching the lane beyond the field, I went quietly down the

grass by the fence before getting over, and then, circling round Blackford Hill, with many turns and windings, and often listening for the sound of footsteps behind me, I at last broke into a steady jog trot, which I kept up for a mile, and getting into the city again by way of the Dalkeith Road and the old High Street, heard a cock faintly crow in some far-off stable-yard before I got back.

It was raining when I went out, it was raining when I came in, and my clothes were soaked through and through. But I had stoked my fire very carefully before leaving, and in ten minutes I had a fine blaze, over which my kettle sang cheerfully.

I locked my door and stripped, and rung out my dripping clothes into my bath, and emptied that at the window, then spread them out before the fire. I mixed myself a very hot and, I fancy, a pretty strong glass of toddy, and never enjoyed one more.

I sat wrapped in my dressing-gown in my big armchair before the fire and I lit my pipe, having made sure that curtains and blinds were drawn, so as not to attract the attention of chance passers-by or of the night policeman.

Now that the thing was done, I was willing to consider whether it had been worth doing, and my delay in considering this point was not so unreasonable as it seems.

I am by nature an excitable, a very nervous man. If I had thought the matter over too carefully beforehand, I should have inclined all through to make the most of the risks and the least of the possible advantages, and might easily have ended by doing nothing. So there had been a sort of reason for my happy-go-lucky way of setting about it. But now I could think the thing over quietly and judge better.

On the whole I thought, and still think, that I was justified in what I had done. If I had gone to the authorities and pressed for an exhumation, there would at least have been delay, perhaps even a refusal.

Could I have pressed the point? What arguments, convincing to a common-sense man, could I have brought forward? And if the exhumation had been allowed, would it not have been known and talked about?

My own experience about such matters is not, even now, large enough for me to speak with certainty, but I don't think I should have got what I wanted—and, after thinking it over that night (or rather that morning, for the sky showed pale in



the east when I drew aside a corner of the blind), I gave a great sigh of satisfaction at having carried my plan through.

As a matter of fact, I knew very little after all, and hadn't the least idea at that moment what to do next. But, for the time, I wouldn't let myself remember that. I had done a good night's work, I thought, and needed rest before I tried to do any more. The next day would suggest the next step, and I should be fit for nothing if I fooled on with a tired brain now. So I stretched out my legs lazily and looked at the fire, seeing all sorts of faces and queer things there, and naturally I fell asleep at last where I was, and being tired, and contented for the moment with myself, I slept, at first dreamlessly, and then with none but more or less amusing dreams. My last before waking was that I was acting best man to Clegg on the occasion of his marriage to Miss Verney, but that at the last moment Mrs. Reay-Carter came in to forbid the banns, because, she said, Clegg was not a member of the Society for the Relief of Superannuated Cabmen. This stopped everything, until I pulled off his collar and showed the mark upon his neck, which satisfied Mrs. Reay-Carter at once, and the organ began to play 'The Voice that Breathed o'er Eden,' but the sound grew and grew, shriller and shriller, until, instead of the organ, it was Donald Moir with the pipes, and all the wedding party began to dance the Hullacan, on which I awoke to find that it was daylight, that my fire had almost died out, and that the pipers were playing upon the parade.

At this I got up and stretched myself, and then went to my bed for half an hour, just to tumble it up thoroughly. After that I dressed, and putting away my clothes of the night before, I went down to breakfast.

At the letter-box MacDougall and Muir were standing, and as I went in, I heard Mac say :

'He shall do us a society column, by Jove ! I'll bet you what you like it's an earl's coronet !'

I didn't pay much attention to this, until Mac, seeing me, said :

'Oh, I think there are some letters here for you, Tree,' and politely brought them over to me, laying them down by my plate, with one that carried a coronet above a monogram conspicuously on the top of the others.

He was so much interested that I put the lot into my pocket, and went leisurely through breakfast, forgetting all

about him presently, while I thought over the affairs of the night before. Then Clegg came down and began wrangling with both Mac and Muir, complaining that the row they had made in Mac's room, which was next to his, had kept him awake.

Muir went out of the room presently, with a parting sneer at such 'highly-strung' individuals, and Mac, who was a good-natured fellow enough, then apologised, saying with a mysterious air that there had been urgent work on hand.

'Can't tell you what it is, Clegg' (Clegg hadn't asked); 'but you'll know all about it later on. Keep your ears open, that's all.'

'It's my ears I'm thinking about,' Clegg retorted. 'If that sort of row is going to be kicked up often, I hope you'll let me know. I'll get cotton wadding for my ears—or change my room. I went up to Tregenna's for peace, but his door was locked. Where were you, Tregenna?'

'Don't know,' I answered. 'That depends on the time. I was out part of the time.'

'What an unholy night to be out!' grumbled Clegg. 'Can't you settle yet when you'll go to the Turnbulls?'

'Not yet,' I said. 'I may tell you at dinner to-night. I've got letters to read and answer—and other things to do.'

'Jolly design on one of your letters, Tree!' Mac chimed in. 'What is it?'

'I haven't read the letter,' I said, stolidly going on with my breakfast.

'It looked like a coronet.'

'Is it likely?' I asked. 'Am I the sort of person to know the people who wear those things?'

'I don't know,' returned Mac. 'Some of 'em ain't up to much, I believe. Now there's old Lord—— on the Universities Commission, and a precious lot *that* ever did to mend matters! Did it make things fair for me?'

'Do you know what a monomaniac is, MacDougall?' I asked, and could have bitten my tongue out directly after for being such a fool. Clegg started and looked at me as though I had slapped his face, and all I could do was to hurry on as quickly as possible:

'Clegg and I, both impartial judges, are sure that you're one, aren't we, Clegg? You've got profs. on the brain, and you won't be happy till they make a martyr of you.'

At this, or at Mac's injured expression, I was glad to hear Clegg laugh, and I went away upstairs with my letters, paying no attention to MacDougall's shout that he wanted me in his room to talk over something.

'You can make yourself comfortable in my room and read your letters and answer them there,' he called after me.

'Thanks !' I shouted back, 'I won't trouble you,' and went upstairs, marvelling at this quick development in him of the editorial instinct.

Once in my room, I settled down comfortably and pulled out my letters. The coroneted one was from the Countess of Jura. I knew that I should have no other titled lady correspondent, and I put it aside as a *bonne bouche*. On the next I saw the writing of Mrs. Reay-Carter, and put that down. The last letter was opened first, because I couldn't remember the hand, and so was curious. It ran as follows :—

'DEAR DR. TREGENNA,—If you are back in town, as I hope you are, please call and see me, this afternoon if possible, about the business you know of. I shall be anxious until I have seen you, and shall be glad if you will call to-day, even at some slight inconvenience to yourself. Do not look upon this as a foolish old woman's fancy.

'Yours faithfully,

'MARY MUNRO.'

Even then it took me a little while to think who my correspondent was, and then I remembered Mrs. Munro, the lady whom I had met at the Tweedies' and who had been working at my horoscope. I shrugged my shoulders, smiling at the mysterious phrase 'business that you know of,' and put the letter down for the moment, taking Mrs. Reay-Carter's next.

The notepaper was of the latest shape and shade, faintly perfumed, with stamped address and monogram. The writing started in one corner and ran diagonally. Of course, also, it was crossed.

'DEAR DR. TREGENNA,—We have come back to this wretched town, and left the dear, funny foreign places. Have you and that nice Mr. Clegg come back? Will you come down *sans cérémonie* to-morrow night, both of you, after dinner,

to meet a *few friends*. Perhaps we will *dance* if you're *good* and want to *very much*.

'*Au revoir*, and be sure to come.

'Yours most truly,

'ADELAIDE MARY REAY-CARTER.'

I put this down too, and took up the last.

'DEAR DOCTOR,—We were very pleased to get your note, written from the "Iona." We're selfishly glad to know that you miss us, for we all miss you. Jura went off this morning for a fortnight's business in London, and may look you up on the way back. There's something—drainage again, I think—that he wants to ask you about. Duncan says his shoulder is "doin' fine." But all this is not what I want to speak of. Old Donald Moir comes in with some excuse or another every day and asks for news of you. He seems quite anxious, although he won't confess it to me. Among the people here, you know, he has a tremendous reputation for seeing things, and although a cockney, of course, is far superior to that sort of thing, I confess he makes me nervous. I haven't spoken to Jura because I was afraid he might laugh at me, and so will you. But we poor foolish women must be humoured sometimes, and so I want you just to be careful, you know, and to let us hear now and then that you're quite well.

'Your grateful patient,

'JANE, COUNTESS OF JURA.'

I lay back and whistled, feeling, I honestly confess, rather uncomfortable. I don't think I can help my tinge of superstition. It runs in the blood, and all I can do, so far as I know, is to keep it from getting the upper hand of me. However, if I had doubted about calling that afternoon on Mrs. Munro, this settled it. I would find out whether she wished to warn me, and if so, against what.

I wrote a few words to the Countess at once, laughing at her a little, but not, I think, in a way to hurt her, and saying, too, how glad I should be to see Lord Jura when he came back.

I also, after a few minutes' hesitation, wrote to Mrs. Reay-Carter, accepting her invitation provisionally, and feeling grim enough as I thought of the contrast between last night's and

to-night's occupation. I would answer Mrs. Munro's letter in person that afternoon, I thought, and lighting my fire, which had been relaid, I tried to puzzle out the right thing to do after last night's adventure. But I was very sleepy still, and my brain was so tired that I didn't seem to see the necessity for prompt action. Nothing pressed so much as the need for sleep. Even death, might it not just be the rest we wanted, the perfect, dreamless sleep?

Who should be envied, the living or the dead?

I debated this sleepily, but could not decide. At any rate, come what would, I was still dog-tired, and finally I struggled no longer. On the contrary, I made up my mind to welcome what I couldn't resist, and poking up the fire, and making myself in every way as comfortable as I could, I stretched out and went to sleep, unashamed, at somewhere about 10.30 A.M., nor did I wake until I was hungry for lunch.

## CHAPTER XLII

### MY HOROSCOPE

At lunch that day I came to the conclusion that I would find out what Mrs. Munro wished to tell me, before doing anything else. I didn't know what action to take, and watched for anything which might suggest a step. This, I suppose, sounds irresolute, and very likely was. It is no business of mine to draw myself as a hero. At the same time, in watching for a suggestion, I watched carefully, and it was, I hope, more a want of brain than moral courage which kept me idle. Of course, when I happened to come across Clegg I watched him carefully too, almost as one might watch another who carried the plague-spot, but he kept quite well, and was perpetually asking me about the visit to the Turnbulls.

I came to the conclusion that Grosvenor's death had not troubled him, because he didn't connect it with any other after hearing Howell's verdict of the cause, for I knew that he had great faith in Howell. Also I came to the conclusion that, quite probably, he knew nothing of the mark I had seen on Reid and Grosvenor, and certainly he didn't know that he carried it; for, as he bent his head over the microscope on my

table, having come up hurriedly and collarless from his room to look at a specimen, the mark showed quite plainly, and on the spur of the moment I touched it with my finger-tip.

‘What’s up?’

He said this unconcernedly, with his eye to the microscope.

‘Something on your neck,’ I answered carelessly; but he only said:

‘Brush it off, will you?’ and went on looking at the specimen before him.

I said nothing more to him about it; but that afternoon, on my way to Mrs. Munro’s, I called on Howell.

It was quite useless. He had gone abroad and was not expected for another week. I left my card with a memorandum on it, urgently pressing him to give me an interview directly he came back, and then I went on to Mrs. Munro’s.

Some houses express nothing but the house decorator; Mrs. Munro’s house expressed herself. The faint scent of the dried rose-leaves which greeted one directly the door was opened, and the quaint pattern of the bowl in which those rose-leaves lay, seemed to me quite characteristic of her. Here and there one saw a tall, gracefully-shaped jar, a fern, a quietly-coloured painting, some out-of-the-way book—nothing startling, all restful and quiet. When Mrs. Munro herself came to meet me, she looked as though she had stepped out quietly from the rose-leaves, which had left their smooth touch and soft colouring on her pleasant face. Her kind eyes, which met mine so cordially and had nothing to hide, made me ready to trust her at once. Here was no hysterical enthusiast or shrieking priestess of the unknown, but a sweet and self-restrained lady.

‘You are quite well?’ she asked, not in the usual way of greeting, but waiting for an answer.

‘Quite well,’ I answered, smiling, and later I noticed that everyone smiled on Mrs. Munro, sure of a smile in return.

‘It was very good of you to come,’ she said, as gratefully as if I had conferred a favour. ‘We will have tea brought in, and then we can talk over my business quietly.’

So tea was brought, of the pleasantest, with little crisp tea-cakes, all on the quaintest of trays, with the whitest of napery and the daintiest of china, and then, Mrs. Munro having told the servant to remember that she was engaged, we were left alone.

She asked me first about my holiday, and I was surprised to find myself chatting away to her quite freely about my friends and my doings, in a way that certainly I hadn't dreamt of doing with anyone else.

She nodded her head approvingly when I spoke of the Countess.

'Yes, I know of her,' she said, 'through friends, though I never met her. A woman like that is one to be depended on.'

'She's ready to do far more for people than they can allow,' I said, 'and I believe everybody in the place worships her.'

'Well, I've sent for you to talk about yourself, not your friends,' Mrs. Munro said, searching in a portfolio. 'Ah, here's what I want!' She held up a sheet of paper. 'Do you know what this is?'

I looked at it with its squares and circles, its figures and unfamiliar signs.

'Is it my horoscope?'

'Yes; do you know anything of the terms used?'

I shook my head.

'It's worse than Greek to me!'

'You know nothing, and you care less, perhaps.'

'I'm interested in anything you've taken so much trouble over,' I answered, laughing.

'Well, I must be satisfied with that, I expect,' and she laid the paper on the table and turned to me again.

'As a medical man you are accustomed to face death.'

'In others,' I added.

'Well, Dr. Tregenna, I hope that will help you to look it in the face for yourself. The thing, from this point of view,' and she laid her hand on the paper, 'is so serious that I am going to be absolutely plain-spoken. Through this month of October you walk in the shadow of death. I have asked you to see me because I think that in this way, better than by writing, I can warn you, not only to be on your watch against danger, but also to settle your affairs as if you were dying.'

'Such prophecies sometimes bring about their own fulfilment, Mrs. Munro,' I said. 'I know people whose death would almost certainly follow if you told them what you tell me.'

'Yes, but believe me, I shouldn't tell them. This much I know, that you are in reasonably good health, and that the danger comes from the outside.'

'Germs!' I said, laughing, but she shook her head.

'I can tell you so little, and what I fear is that you will go away saying "Here is a silly old woman who has wasted my afternoon," and that you'll do nothing.'

'If I can't believe what you say, at any rate I shan't be rude over it,' I told her. 'You're speaking of things of which I know nothing whatever, that's all. I'm very much obliged to you for the trouble you've taken over this, but—what shall I do?'

'I can't warn you more thoroughly,' she said, sighing. 'I can't say where the danger will come from, but it comes this month and it threatens sudden death. Be reasonably careful, therefore, and since death is always amongst us, set your house in order.'

'That won't take long,' I said, laughing. 'Two rooms, kept fairly tidy, hold almost all my worldly goods, Mrs. Munro. They shall be swept and garnished,' and then, feeling that I might seem careless and ungrateful, I added, 'I really will do all that you ask, and I'm not so careless as I pretend. But I wouldn't like to be one of those who, through fear of death, are all their lifetime subject to bondage. You say that I walk in the shadow of death this month. Let me, at any rate, walk free from any suspicion of having been ungrateful to you.'

Mrs. Munro shook her head and denied any such notion.

'I only ask one thing more of you. If you can see my friend Mr. Maxwell-Farquharson, will you show him this horoscope and ask him what he makes of it?'

At this I hesitated. It would have seemed easy enough to make a vague, general promise, and then forget all about it; but Mrs. Munro was one to whom it was easier even to be discourteous than untruthful.

'I've no claim on Maxwell-Farquharson,' I said at last. 'I'm going to keep your kind warning before me. Even if I happen to be in danger, why, I'm not sure that a busy man would think that any excuse for worrying him.'

Mrs. Munro leant toward me as if to urge it, and then suddenly changed her mind.

'Well, if you happen to meet him and he begins to talk, you won't refuse to listen, will you?'

'Not I,' I promised readily. 'He always interests me,' and with that the matter was dropped altogether, and Mrs. Munro showed me her pictures and told me amusing stories of many



celebrated people whom she knew personally, but who to me were mere names. She saw me to the door at last, and wished me good-bye.

'How can I thank you for the trouble you've taken?' I asked her.

'By taking care of yourself, Dr. Tregenna, and by coming out again soon, if you're not tired of hearing an old woman chatter.' She said this with a smile and an outstretched hand.

When I reached the road I looked back. She stood in the doorway still, a quiet grey little figure against the dark background, watching me out of sight, and I am sure, wishing me better fortune than she expected for me.

After that, I went quietly back to the Rookery, feeling that, after all, there are still good and pleasant people left in this wicked world, and that, on the whole, I was not anxious to leave it just then.

When everybody is out of town, it is astonishing how many are left!

On reaching Mrs. Reay-Carter's that evening—alone, for Clegg had, through some sudden fancy, refused to come—I found that Edinburgh was not nearly so empty as I had supposed.

The rooms were not crowded, but that was an added and unusual pleasure at Mrs. Reay-Carter's. Caird, the artist, and his wife were there, so, to my surprise and delight, were the Tweedies, also Dr. David, Howell and Maxwell-Farquharson. Muir was there too, looking more discontented than ever, and I wondered just for a moment, in passing him, what the man could be doing that he should get so worn and haggard. Also there were sundry other artists, musicians and people, whom I knew only by sight or not at all, and sitting quietly in a corner, talking to Dr. David, was Mrs. Munro.

She saw me as quickly as I saw her, and nodded at once toward Farquharson. I couldn't reach her for the moment, but smiled back, signalling that I remembered, and made my way to Mrs. Tweedie, whom I had not seen or heard of since the night of Reid's death, for they had left for the Continent early the following morning.

We reached a corner together, and I told her what I could, since she already knew from Mrs. Reay-Carter of the poor Yellow's end, but I had not said much before Mrs. Reay-Carter sailed up and joined us.

She was in grand form just now. The baths, which she had insisted upon for Reay-Carter's sake, had done her a world of good, she informed us, and she smiled upon me when I said how pleasant it was to think of self-denial being rewarded for once.

'We had a *delightful* time,' she said. 'So unconventional, you know, and so funny. Lights were out at half-past ten every night, and we walked before breakfast!'

'I've had the pleasure of seeing you out before breakfast, even in Edinburgh, Mrs. Reay-Carter.'

'Ah! yes, I remember. But that was charity, you know, and charity begins at home! Now isn't that a bright thing to say, Dr. Tregenna, and won't you please laugh at my poor little joke?'

'I'm so stupid at seeing these things,' I said. 'Probably I shall laugh later.'

'Horrid man! Is that sarcastic or not? Where have you spent your holidays, and have you seen 'your friend the Countess lately?'

'I've seen her once or twice,' I said, 'at a distance.'

'Does she remember you?'

'I can't expect it,' I said, and at that moment the door was opened, and a servant announced Miss Verney.

She stood in the doorway and blushed, actually blushed, before moving forward to meet Mrs. Reay-Carter. I had never seen her do such a thing before, and confess that I was interested thereby.

'I never asked if you were engaged,' she said in a low voice to Mrs. Reay-Carter, 'only whether you were at home. I wouldn't have come in if I had known. I wasn't prepared.'

Indeed it was easy to see that she had been as much taken by surprise as Mrs. Reay-Carter was. Her high-necked, plain, black dress showed that as well as her unusual manner.

But Mrs. Reay-Carter was equal to the occasion.

'How good of you to call on me so soon! I never thought you were in town. Now, you're not going to run off. There are only people you know here. Dr. Tregenna, Miss Verney is your special charge until I can have a little chat with her,' and nodding to us both, she moved away to greet someone else.

Mrs. Tweedie, to my disgust, after bowing to Miss Verney, turned and began talking to Caird, although he, for the first minute or two at any rate, kept looking away from her to Miss

Verney. This I understood while I watched, for her face showed the expression he had given in his picture to an extent that I had never seen before. There was almost a shyness too, and a melancholy about her pose and movements that I wondered at.

'Is it possible,' I asked myself, 'that this comes of Grosvenor's death?' I knew what an attraction he had for many women; was this his last conquest?

I stood staring and felt that I ought to talk, but truly I should have known sooner what to say to a perfect stranger. I don't think she noticed my silence either. She was looking about the room with great, solemn grey eyes, as though the change of the last few weeks had changed her too, and made her feel that she had no business here.

I heard some of the younger guests pleading with Mrs. Reay-Carter for a dance, and she consented, saying that for those who didn't care to dance there were the other rooms.

'Do you care to dance?' I asked Miss Verney.

She shook her head without, I think, saying anything.

'Let us clear out, then,' I said. 'They want to roll up the rugs.'

I led her into the next room, which was cool and dusky, and almost empty. The lights were down low, the curtains were not drawn, and through the window came the dreamy light of the young moon. She leaned back, listening to the music, with the moonlight full on her face, and presently she grew pale and began to shiver.

'Are you cold?' I asked. 'Let me get you a shawl.'

I moved to fetch one, but she laid a cold hand on mine.

'No, it will pass off presently. Besides I am going in a few minutes.'

'Mrs. Reay-Carter will be vexed with me if I let you go. She expects a chat presently.'

'I can see her another time. Listen to the music! How can they dance to it?'

She looked at me and we listened, looking at one another, and as we listened, there grew, for me, a well-remembered sound, that of a violin played in a soft undertone, running through, woven into the dance, weeping through the merriest, mocking through the brightest tune—Reid's violin, as I had often heard him play it at such times.

Whether she heard it as I did I cannot say, but I shivered a little too.

'I must go,' she said. 'I can come again about what I wanted.'

'Who is your escort?' I asked, but she shook her head.

'I came alone; I am accustomed to it.'

'I am not in tune to-night,' I said. 'The music jars on me, and you are tired. Be my excuse for getting away, and let me see you home.'

She made no protest against this, and I took her to Mrs. Reay-Carter, as she paused for a moment in a waltz.

'Going!' she said. 'I've had no chat with you. Lunch with me to-morrow at one. You too, Dr. Tregenna! This is too bad!' but her partner, a sprightly youth, who was evidently anxious to get every possible turn with her, showed his impatience, and she yielded.

'You know the way to the cloak-room? A girl is there.' And she was twirled off again.

I took Miss Verney to the cloak-room door, and waited. While I stood there, longing to get out of hearing of the hateful music, Maxwell-Farquharson pounced upon me.

'Ah, there you are! Going already?' The younger generation keeps good hours. When can I see you?

'At any time you like in the next few days.'

'I'd like to now,' he said. 'Are you waiting for a lady?'

'Yes.'

'Well, I'll go to hear Reay-Carter's paper at the Royal Society to-morrow night. Meet me there and I'll take you in. Will you come?'

'With pleasure,' I said.

'Very well, we'll chat at the Nighthawks' after. Good-night!' And he went back to the drawing-room just before Miss Verney came out.

I followed her down into the hall, and there I saw Howell, just putting on his overcoat.

'Did you get my card?' I asked him.

'Yes, are you coming my way?'

I shook my head and signed towards Miss Verney, who was moving to the door.

'I'm on duty just now. Didn't hope to see you for another week.'

'Called back,' he said. 'Can't make appointment for to-

morrow. I'll send you a card in two days. Is it anything very special ?'

'It seems so to me,' I whispered. 'If I could see you any time early to-morrow morning ?'

'No use,' he said. 'I go off at three-something A.M. for Inverness, and have to be at the Royal Society at night if I can. I'll see you directly I can manage it.'

All this was said in hurried, broken sentences, while Miss Verney waited. I nodded to Howell and hurried to join her, apologising for the delay. We took one from the string of cabs outside the door, and drove off.

## CHAPTER XLIII

### THE COUNTESS INTERVENES

THE cab rolled on through the ill-paved streets with so much rattle that it was practically impossible to talk. Miss Verney leant back with her face in the shadow, and it was only now and then, as we clattered past a lamp, that I caught a glimpse of her face and saw the flash of the light upon her eyes.

We had passed out of the noisy streets, and were going round the Meadows, before I spoke.

'I'm much obliged to you for an excuse for coming away early to-night,' I said.

'It is all so trivial, so small and shallow !' she muttered, moving restlessly in her corner. 'You surely are tiring of it all ?'

'I never saw very much of society,' I answered. 'It would soon tire me if I tried to act the part of a society man, I dare say. As it is, an evening out amuses me sometimes.'

'But your heart is never in it ?'

'Gracious, no !' I answered, trying to laugh and shake off the dismal feeling that the music had roused in me. 'I don't profess to have very high ideals, but a drawing-room won't satisfy me, I hope, while there's work to do. I thought you rather liked that sort of thing, though.'

At this moment the cab, which had been jolting along steadily enough, stopped with a jerk, and the cabman rattled on the window.

'What's wrong?' I asked, putting my head out.

He said there was a man lying in the road and that he had nearly gone over him.

'Wait a moment, then,' I said. 'Miss Verney, excuse me a minute while I see this fellow and get him out of the way.'

I jumped out, and crossing the road, knelt by the snoring lump. The man was very drunk and nothing more. He lay full length along the road, clutching a half-empty bottle; the smell of whisky was marked—and I was interested to see the face of an old acquaintance. He had been one of the diggers at the cemetery the night before. Except that he was dead drunk, the man seemed quite well and comfortable, but I stood wondering what my responsibility would have been if our cab had gone over him.

When I looked up I was rather disgusted to find that Miss Verney stood by me, looking down on the fellow with shrinking aversion.

'Go back at once,' I said sharply. 'The man's only drunk, but I must move him. He might have been dead if our cabman hadn't seen him.'

'Better dead than that!' she ejaculated. 'If one only knew——' but she turned and went back to the cab, while I threw away the rest of his whisky, and being afraid to let the cabman leave his horse, with Miss Verney in the cab, I dragged the man off the road alone, and propping him against a tree, loosened his collar and came away.

'It's all right! Drive on, cabby! He may thank his stars you saw him,' I said, getting in, and we moved on again. 'It's a nice point,' I said, settling into my corner. 'I've very little doubt that I am responsible indirectly for that man's drunkenness. How far should I have been to blame if he had died there?' "

Miss Verney sat up and stared at me as though she hadn't understood.

'Would you imagine yourself to blame at all? Do you suppose *you* manage these things?'

'I know—I have just dragged him off the road. I managed that, anyhow,' I said. 'I also believe that I helped to put him there.'

'This is foolish and wicked,' she returned, leaning forward and speaking quickly and eagerly. 'We do not govern the *lives* of men any more than the bow governs the violin. The man

was not fit to die, and you were allowed to guard him from death. If he had been fit, you would have been allowed to leave him. There is no praise or blame. When his turn comes he will go.'

'But I can help or hinder,' I objected.

'You can be used as the instrument to help or hinder. You do neither by yourself. And why should you try to hinder if the man were fit to die? Is this life so happy, and don't you hope for a better?'

I shook my head.

'I never argue, if I can help it, just for the sake of arguing. As a medical man, I am bound to keep alive good and bad alike, if I may. It's not for me to judge. I think,' and I began to laugh, 'you would object to me as a visitor if I came, not to try and cure any trouble, but to decide if you ought to be cured.'

I wished, as we returned to silence, that she had not used the illustration of the bow and violin. It reminded me of Reid again, and his long, melancholy face seemed to rise before me, while I heard the fiddle in the distance as we rattled over the stones.

Presently the houses thinned again, and we were among the scattered, newly-built villas on the outskirts of the town. Now and then one caught a glimpse of Arthur's Seat, bathed in the moonlight which was touching the fields with silver and relieving the black shadows cast by the roadside trees. We passed along the broad, deserted road, and in a short time stopped at her garden doors.

The man jumped down to ring, but she stopped him.

'I have my key,' she explained, and getting out, opened the side door.

The night was so fine that I decided to walk back, and sent the cab off, so that, when Miss Verney turned, after opening the door, she found me standing beside her.

'Are you not going to drive back?' she asked.

'No,' I said, laughing. 'If you and providence will allow me, I will be used as the instrument to take you up your drive—having been allowed to come so far. Is it decreed?'

'It is decreed,' she said, and led the way.

'I had almost forgotten your dog,' I said, as we walked up. 'Once inside these doors, I expect you are safe enough. I suppose he's loose.'

'Yes,' she said, and presently he came shambling down the little drive, without any noise, seeming to have recognised me as well as his mistress before I saw him.

When we reached the house door I held out my hand, but Miss Verney stood looking at me without taking it.

'You are in no great hurry?' she asked.

'No,' I said, 'not if I can do anything for you.'

'Come in, then, and let us talk a little. I will make you a cup of coffee.'

I hung back, hesitating.

'It must be late,' I said. 'I don't like to disturb your household now, Miss Verney. Let me call to-morrow, and give me afternoon tea instead.'

'To-morrow?' she echoed. 'I have no idea what I may be doing to-morrow. Come! You always interest me, and I cannot sleep yet. Meg is asleep long ago, and there's no one else to disturb.'

I hesitated still, while she stood looking at me; but at last, shrugging my shoulders, I followed her in. I was really wondering whether she was not running some risk from idle gossip in doing a thing like this, but, if her household was accustomed to these vagaries, I supposed I might humour her. I turned to close the door, but she told me not to. The dog was chasing a cat in the moonlight, and she said the place would be all safe while he was free to come and go as he chose.

She led the way up to the room where I had seen her last, and lighting the lamp and telling me to sit down, she began to make coffee, while I alternately looked about the room and watched her.

The little reading-lamp which she had lit scarcely did more than brighten up the table at which she stood. The fire, which she had stirred up when we came in, did more to make things clear; but its flames rose and fell in a flickering way, and most of the time the corners of the room were hidden in deep shadows, which lengthened or shortened according to the blaze. One or two pictures which I thought might be good hung on the walls, and one side of the room showed well-filled book-shelves. I was struck with the absence of nick-nacks, photographs, and such things peculiarly feminine. Such ornaments as there were seemed distinctly artistic and of considerable value. The only thing that seemed at all peculiar was glinting now and then on a small side table as it caught



the firelight. On crossing the room to satisfy my curiosity, I found it to be a crystal sphere lying in an open leather case, and perhaps as large as my fist.

I picked it up and was looking into it closely when Miss Verney crossed the room with my coffee, which I took and thanked her for, and then, putting the crystal into its case, came back to my chair, but while we talked there in the half light, its sudden flash now and then drew my eyes back that way.

Miss Verney persisted in returning to the questions raised by our meeting with the man in the road, who, no doubt, was still calmly snoring where I had left him.

As far as I could see, she thought herself a fatalist, and argued ingeniously to support her belief. But her logic was not thorough, for the next moment she spoke of duty and the way one neglected it in society. As she leant forward and the lamplight fell upon her face, I thought it thinner than ever, but also more refined, and just now it was full of excitement and enthusiasm.

'Hysterical!' I thought to myself—that being the word in the medical vocabulary which covers everything feminine that we don't understand—and I lay back in my chair, idly speculating on what help Howell could give me, and what his opinion would be, while my glance wandered dreamily from Miss Verney to the crystal at the far side of the room, and then went back to Miss Verney again.

The warmth of the fire was making me drowsy, in spite of, or perhaps with the help of, the coffee, for coffee at different times acts strongly in very different ways. I even found myself nodding, and Miss Verney's voice sounded monotonously soothing and farther and farther away.

I gave myself a little shake and rose to my feet.

'It's awfully rude of me,' I said, 'and I'm very much ashamed of myself; but I'm quite sleepy. I've been busy just lately, and your room is so comfortable and warm. You must let me call again, Miss Verney, when I'm more wide awake.'

'You don't believe that things are foreshadowed or foreseen?' she said, continuing her argument. 'You don't think they're fore-ordained, so you won't be interested in that crystal I see you looking at?'

'What has that to do with it?' I asked.

~ 'Have you never heard of seeing in the crystal?'

'You don't mean to say,' I asked, stifling a yawn, that anyone believes in that sort of thing now?'

For answer she crossed the room, and lifting the crystal from its case, brought it back.

'I got it in India when I was there last. It was my father's. In it, I was told, he had foreseen my mother's death and his own. But it foretells, so they say, good as well as evil fortune. Look in it, if a scientific man dare do so without losing caste.'

I smiled sleepily, and sitting down again, looked up at it, as she held it before me.

'I see nothing,' I said. 'Are you satisfied?' and I looked at her as she bent above me. What grand grey eyes she had! There was more in them than in a hundred crystals, and I was content to sit and look, but she was not satisfied.

'Look again!' she said, and I turned lazily to the crystal once more.

'My eyes are very tired,' I told her, 'and the thing grows misty.'

'Watch it!' she said. 'Watch it, and tell me what you see.'

Then, while I watched, the mistiness in the sphere grew thinner and rolled away, leaving an inky blackness, and then out of the blackness, faint and shadowy at first, and then clearer, rose a face.

'Tell me what you see!'

The voice was still Miss Verney's, but it sounded far off and thin, and I paid no attention. The face grew and formed under my eyes, sneering, bitter, implacable, with a smile that made the lips writhe, while above them lay great, calm, inscrutable eyes that saw me, and saw through me and thought me nothing.

I strained my head away from the crystal that still overhung me, but the face filled the room, and its eyes met mine wherever I looked. Was I asleep or awake? I could not tell, and I did not care. If only I could escape from those eyes! And then, suddenly, while sleep swirled about me and I plunged into it, as though in its deeper depths I might escape this horror, the crystal fell, the door was flung open, and I started up, gaping and rubbing my eyes, wondering whether I was still asleep, sunk from one dream into another, or whether it was really the Countess of Jura who stood alone in the doorway.

## CHAPTER XLIV

## OUR MISUNDERSTANDING

IT was the Countess who stood there, flushed and panting, one hand holding her cloak about her, while with the other she caressed the great dog that fawned on her as if he had met an old friend.

I was wide enough awake now, and went forward to meet her.

'You here !' I said. 'And now ! What is the matter ?'

She stood looking from one to the other of us, and then came a step further.

'I must apologise,' she said. 'Introduce me to this lady, Dr. Tregenna. Haven't I met her before ?'

'Miss Verney—the Countess of Jura,' I introduced them, and looked again at the Countess for an explanation, but she scarcely noticed me.

'I must apologise, Miss Verney,' she repeated, 'and I am ready to do so at once. Dr. Tregenna is urgently needed, and I have been searching for him everywhere. That is my excuse for this intrusion.'

'What is it ? Who is ill ?' I asked ; but the Countess went on, looking at Miss Verney, who looked back at her and said nothing :

'Your garden door was open, and since it is after midnight, I couldn't wake them at the lodge to let my carriage in. Your house door was open too, and your dog was my guide.'

She stopped, but Miss Verney simply bowed, and the Countess's manner grew more formal :

'I trust Miss Verney will accept my profound apology for interrupting the consultation. If I may be allowed, I will wait in another room until it is over and Dr. Tregenna is free to come with me. My carriage waits in the road for us.'

'There's no consultation,' I said, laughing. 'At any rate, no professional consultation. I've kept Miss Verney up far too long already, Lady Jura. She'll be glad to get rid of me. Miss Verney, may I pour out a cup of your nice hot coffee for Lady Jura before we go ?'

With a word of apology, Miss Verney, who had now got

back her self-possession, went to pour out a cup, but Lady Jura protested :

‘Mrs. Reay-Carter kindly made me take some soup while she was telling me what she knew of your movements. If you will forgive me, Miss Verney, I will carry off Dr. Tregenna at once.’

‘What is wrong, Lady Jura?’ I asked anxiously.

‘I can tell you all in the carriage,’ she answered. ‘It will save time, and I mustn’t intrude longer on Miss Verney.’

She bowed as she spoke, and Miss Verney, taking up the lamp, lighted us to the door, with the dog by her side.

‘You are fortunate, Lady Jura,’ she said, ‘in not having any trouble with my guardian.’

‘All dogs are my friends,’ Lady Jura replied carelessly, and bidding Miss Verney good-night once more, we hurried down the drive, while I wondered what patient needed me.

In the road a closed brougham waited for us, the horses stamping and pawing the road impatiently, while the coachman sat erect and immovable on the box, as though ready to stay there all night if need be, and another servant stood at the open carriage-door.

Lady Jura stepped in and I after her.

‘Home!’ she said to the man, who touched his hat and sprang beside the coachman, and we whirled away down the moonlit road.

I drew the warm furs over me, after seeing that she was well guarded against the cold, for the night was frosty and the chilliest part of the twenty-four hours was coming on. When, I wondered sleepily, should I get a full night’s rest again? I must mend my ways and keep better hours, and even as I thought so, I nodded, and then suddenly remembering Lady Jura’s errand, I sat up erect again.

‘Who’s ill?’ I asked. ‘Not Lord Jura, I hope!’

‘No, I’m glad to say. He’s still in London and quite well. I heard from him this morning.’

‘I’m very glad it’s neither of you. Tell me all that you can about the case.’

I spoke drowsily, and the Countess leant forward and looked at me more closely.

‘Poor fellow! Why you’re half asleep!’

‘I’m so sorry,’ I said, ‘but I can’t help it. I’ve had two or three late nights. Tell me all about the case. Who is it?’

'One of our own people,' she answered. 'But sleep there in your corner if you're so tired. You'll understand better when you're rested.'

'If I only had five minutes,' I told her. 'But it seems so rude, and I ought to be thinking about the patient.'

'I'll be responsible,' she said. 'The patient is in my charge. Go to sleep, we've a long way to drive. I'm not staying in town. I'll wake you in plenty of time.' And with another mumbled apology, which I believe was never properly finished, I lay back in my corner and fell fast asleep to the sound of the rolling wheels and the swift, steady rhythm of the trotting horses' feet.

How long we were moving I cannot say, but I never woke or moved until the carriage stopped. I heard gates being opened while I stirred sleepily in my corner, and then, suddenly remembering myself, I looked out of the window, and saw that we were rolling quickly along a broad avenue, from which presently we turned into a circular space before the house. The carriage door was opened and I jumped out, and gave Lady Jura my hand.

'You never woke me,' I said, sulkily. 'I might have known all you could tell me about the case by this time !'

At this she gave a funny, nervous little laugh, but said nothing, and I followed her into the house—to find Lord Jura waiting for us in the hall.

On seeing him, Lady Jura began to laugh more than ever, and turning into a room off the hall, where we followed—Lord Jura shutting the door behind us—she went on laughing so long that I thought it would end in hysterics.

Meanwhile he stood and stared at us both, and I at them, until at last she stopped laughing and wiped her eyes.

'It's too funny,' she explained. 'I can't help laughing. What did you come here for just now, Jura ?'

'Where else should I go?' he asked, naturally enough, and then, turning to me stiffly, 'Perhaps you can explain the joke, Dr. Tregenna !'

'I don't know it,' I said, abruptly enough. 'Lady Jura has fetched me from a friend's house to see a patient, and I'm ready when she is.'

He turned to her again.

'Why didn't you say so at once, Jean ? Who is ill here ?'

But at his words she started laughing again, and it was a

few moments before she gasped out 'No one! That's just the funny part of it!' and went on laughing.

Upon this I grew really angry. I had been thoroughly fooled and placed in a very awkward position. As for Lord Jura, he stood with his elbow on the mantelpiece, looking as though he needed to make a strong effort to be patient.

'I'm very sorry for this intrusion, Lord Jura,' I said, as coolly as I could. 'If there's anything more you wish to ask me, I shall be glad to answer you. If there isn't, I had better go. I hope that Lady Jura will explain this practical joke to you, and that you'll consider whether an explanation isn't due to me too.'

I waited a moment, and then, as he still said nothing, but stood moodily looking at his wife, I went to the door.

But the Countess straightened herself up in the chair into which she had dropped on coming into the room.

'How absurd! Is this your hospitality, Jura?'

He still kept silent, standing by the fire, pulling and biting his moustache, and at last I answered for him:

'Lord Jura is too polite to say what he is thinking, which is that hospitality has its limits where uninvited guests are concerned.'

'Didn't I invite you?'

'That is what Lord Jura wishes to have explained, I think,' I retorted, and he nodded his head to this.

'You've taken me by surprise, Jean. I don't know what I'm doing scarcely yet. This morning I got a letter in London from you, dated from where I left you, and implying that I should find you there. Why are you here?'

'And I,' she retorted impatiently, 'got this morning a letter dated from London, and distinctly stating that you would be there another week. Why are you here?'

'Business ended unexpectedly,' he said, looking at her gloomily. 'I had no idea that I ought to warn you of my coming.'

'Business called me unexpectedly,' she returned with a careless air. 'I had no idea that you expected me to wire you about it.'

She sat tapping her foot sharply on the polished floor, and looking at him with what, at any other time, I might have thought a sweetly rebellious air, but this was getting serious, and it was time to take it seriously.

‘I hope Lady Jura sees the awkward position she puts me in,’ I said.

‘I don’t,’ she retorted obstinately. ‘If you weren’t both silly, you’d see there’s nothing to get on stilts about.’

‘You don’t think it worth while to explain, then, Jean?’ he asked, and I thought his voice sounded a little unsteady.

‘No, I don’t. Let this poor, sleepy man go to his room, and I’ll think it over, and perhaps tell you all about it to-morrow. I’m not inclined to be questioned any more to-night.’

This was too much, and I had no idea of waiting her ladyship’s pleasure any longer.

‘Allow me to say good-night, then,’ I said. ‘Lord Jura, if her ladyship’s explanation isn’t satisfactory to you, you know where to find me.’

‘Gracious me! Where’s the madman going?’ asked her ladyship.

‘Anywhere out of a house where I’m unwelcome,’ I said hotly.

‘Why, Jura, tell him! There isn’t a place where he’ll get a bed at this time of night for miles!’

‘If you’ll tell me where your estate ends, I promise to get beyond it,’ I said. ‘That’s all I need to be comfortable for the night.’ And I went out of the room. I trust for the sake of propriety that I didn’t show my temper by slamming the door, but I can’t be certain of that.

I went my fastest down the drive, and stopped for nothing, though once I quite plainly heard a voice calling, and the tread of feet behind me. So much, I thought, for friendship in aristocratic circles. To be humbugged by the women and suspected by the men was all a straightforward commoner could expect. Never again would I be such an ass! Never again should people, men or women, have a chance of making a fool of me through my trustfulness! I would get to my work and stick to it, and would-be patrons might go hang! Mind you, it never entered my head to think any harm of Lady Jura. I was not so foolish. I merely thought of her as a feather-headed woman who, in playing a prank on me, had met with an unexpected check, and who didn’t particularly care how far I was hurt thereby.

She would explain her joke to her husband when she thought him sufficiently teased, and then perhaps he’d want to apologise. He might want! It should be a long while before

I would darken their doors again. I was probably a snob ever to have associated with them, and I had got my deserts. What was I to them ; and what could they be to me ? I ground my teeth at the thought of the way I had been received, and pushed on through the night until I was tired, muttering to myself as I went. The trees threw strange shadows across my path, and rose like goblins in the moonlight, stretching out long, gnarled arms, and pointing at me, while once an owl hooted in derision. But I pushed on, not knowing where I went, but determined to get my feet off Lord Jura's ground before I thought of rest.

My feet grew like lead, my eyes refused to stay open, and my head swam. But when at last I turned off the road and worked my way into a great pile of leaves, under a mossy bank, I felt that at least that night I was not beholden for my bed to those I had left.

## CHAPTER XLV

### MARTYRS TO SCIENCE

WHEN I looked about me in the grey dawn, I found myself near the shore of the Forth, and some five miles out of Edinburgh. I brushed the dust and leaves off my clothes, and buttoning my overcoat up about my throat to hide my white tie and crumpled shirt front, I stepped out, looking, I have no doubt, a sufficiently rakish figure. A milkcart overtaking me a quarter of an hour later, I hailed the man, and offered him a couple of shillings to set me down at the nearest point in his round to my rooms.

This he did, and, on going in, I met no one but a staring housemaid, who, no doubt, discussed my disgraceful habits with the rest of the kitchen council.

At breakfast I met MacDougall, who kept me fully occupied in listening to him while he raved on about the cowardice and greed of the printer, who, on seeing the manuscript papers for the 'Antiseptic' had declared that he must have a guarantee, and wasn't very keen on the job anyway.

'But that pleases you, doesn't it ?' I asked Mac mischievously when I found that he must be heard.

'Pleases me ! How should it ? If he's afraid to print and wants a guarantee, what can I do ?'



'The more dangerous it is to print, the better it'll sell,' I reminded him, and at this he brightened up.

'Of course, of course, and you men'll help with the guarantee, won't you?' And we'll make it hotter than ever!

This was an awkward proposal, and I was humming and hawing over it when one of the servants came and told me that a lady was waiting for me in my room.

'Is it dusted?' was my first question, for I knew how critically lady friends surveyed our places when they deigned to call.

'I just finished it, sir,' the girl said, and thankful for that, at any rate, I went off, wondering who it could be so early, for the girl was new to the place, and couldn't tell me the lady's name.

Would it be Lady Jura? I half hoped so, as I ran up the stair, and felt that, after all, if she really came with a proper explanation and apology, I should probably forgive her. It might be Miss Verney, though, and if she asked about last night's patient, I should be in a fix. I went quickly into the room, and am afraid that my face must have shown some disappointment when Mrs. Tweedie turned from the window and held out her hand.

'You miserable fellow!' she said at once, laughing, 'who did you expect to see at this time in the morning? You look quite disappointed!'

'Surprised, if you please. Not disappointed,' I told her. 'You know very well how glad I always am when you spare time for me.'

'That's all very well,' she retorted, nodding her head wisely. 'But it looked as if you weren't expecting quite such an old friend. I can use my eyes, sir!'

'You frighten me,' I said. 'If I only knew what to confess——!'

'No, I don't invite confidences, and besides, that's not what I came about.'

'Whatever that is, you have time to sit down,' I insisted, and drew forward a chair for her.

'As if the mistress of a house could sit and gossip so early as this!' she said, but sat down nevertheless.

'How well you men know how to make yourselves comfortable up here! One's almost afraid to invite you to one's modest home.'

'Yes,' I said, 'it's a great condescension on our part, but I go out sometimes to visit those who can appreciate the honour. Go on.'

'Well, we want you to dine quietly with us to-night and go to the Royal Society's meeting afterwards with my husband.'

'You're very good,' I answered, 'but I've promised to meet Maxwell-Farquharson there. I don't know if that makes any difference?'

'Not a bit. He dines with us. You and he will be the only ones beside ourselves. I believe the paper is to be a very interesting one, and I'm coming too.'

'Ladies are not allowed there,' I reminded her.

'They're not invited,' she said, 'but that's a very different thing. I've persuaded my husband and Mr. Maxwell-Farquharson to take me to a seat by the door, and I'd like to see the member who will dare to move me.' Besides, Mrs. Reay-Carter told me she was coming to hear her husband read his paper, though how it interests her I can't tell.'

'It's her husband's,' I said.

'That's just what I mean,' Mrs. Tweedie explained, if the remark can be called an explanation. 'Besides,' she went on, 'it isn't all his. It's really on notes that Professor Grosvenor had made. Snakes, you know, and all that sort of thing!'

'What is "that sort of thing"? ' I asked. 'Women and apples, and so on?'

'You've been terribly flippant ever since you were capped! was all the answer Mrs. Tweedie vouchsafed, unless an attempt to rap me gently over the knuckles with her umbrella may be considered an answer. 'Will you come?'

'Of course I will,' I said, 'if you promise to give me as lordly a dinner as I get here.'

• 'We'll try,' she said, moving toward the door. 'Seven o'clock, mind!'

'Did I ever keep you waiting?' I asked. 'Am I not a perfect prince for punctuality? This is to be a red-letter day, I can tell you. Besides dining with you, I'm to lunch with Mrs. Reay-Carter.'

'Is it right to eat with people you laugh at as much as you do at Mrs. Reay-Carter?'

'No, I don't do that sort of thing as a rule, and I don't feel quite happy over it now, if that's any comfort to you. But she flung the invitation at me as an afterthought, while in the

"mazy dance," or whatever the poets call it, and I hadn't time to decline. I dare say it'll give me indigestion—will that do?"

'No, it won't. You'll come to us like a bear, and refuse to eat any dinner. However, you can "draw" Reay-Carter on his paper, and give us the benefit.'

We were passing down the stair while all this chatter went on, and the last words were said as Mrs. Tweedie nodded good-bye from the street. I watched her moving away, and was disagreeably surprised when a hand was laid on my shoulder, and I found that it belonged to MacDougall.

'I've worked it all out, Tree!' he said exultingly. 'Look how it comes out! Each of us stumps up a pound to start with, and promises to be ready with another if he's called upon. So I'm just going to take five pounds to the printer, and you might hand me over yours now, if it's convenient.'

'It isn't,' I said 'snappishly. 'You can't do that sort of thing without calling a meeting—and if you call one just now, I can't come!'. And with that I fled to my room, while Mac, with a grieved expression, watched me from the foot of the stair.

For fear of this persevering schemer, I locked my door, and read a new novel until it was time to think of going to lunch. I met Miss Verney at the Reay-Carters' door, and she seemed rather surprised to see me.

'What of the patient?' she asked, raising her eyebrows. 'I didn't expect to see you here. What was the matter?'

'I've not completed my diagnosis yet,' I said, wishing the servant would hurry up and answer the bell.

'I wonder they let you come away,' she said, looking puzzled. 'Lady Jura can afford to keep a doctor as long as she likes, I suppose. Are you going back to-night?'

'Not unless I'm sent for,' I told her, and then, much to my relief, the door was opened.

Mrs. Reay-Carter met us with enthusiasm.

'So good of you! Now, Dr. Tregenna, you must entertain yourself for a few minutes. Mr. Reay-Carter hasn't come in yet, and I'm not going to let Miss Verney sit down to lunch with her hat on, as if she were an Israelite. She must stay and have a good long talk with me after lunch, so I'm going to take her away to get her hat off.'

Away they went therefore, and I picked up a magazine and skimmed it until the drawing-room door opened again. It

was not for the ladies, however. Reay-Carter came in and shook hands with an absent air, uttering commonplaces with a 'suppose-I-must' sort of expression about him, and looking alternately at the door and at his watch.

'Your paper for to-night must keep you busy in addition to your regular work,' I said to him.

At this he brightened up a little.

'Ah—yes. That is true. But it is extremely interesting. It is not so much the actual writing, but the experiments tend to exhaust one.'

'I know none of the details,' I said. 'I expect to be much interested to-night. Are you going to show us experiments?'

At this Reay-Carter smiled stiffly over his collar. I always felt as though his collar and his face must be starched and ironed together, and to-day particularly I thought that there was not much more blood in the second than there was in the first.

'I—ah—fear,' he remarked, with as amused an air as he was capable of showing, 'that unless some of my audience like to experiment on their own responsibility, I cannot promise anything of the kind. The—ah—fact is, that on myself I have gone a little too far for my personal comfort. That, of course, is nothing.'

'Do you mean to say that you have been using any poisons on yourself?' I asked, doubting, I confess, for Reay-Carter did not strike one as enthusiastic enough in anything to go that far.

'It was necessary,' he admitted calmly. 'Rabbits are—ah—not quite satisfactory.'

'What is your special point?' I asked him, getting interested in spite of myself in this cold-blooded, strictly scientific spirit of thorough investigation.

Reay-Carter smiled again, perhaps a trifle less stiffly, and unbent a little more.

'There are many points,' he said. 'The one which tended to interest me perhaps specially was the question of any possible variation in the strength of the venom with a variation of the reptile's mood of the moment.' He stopped and surveyed his finger-nails with a melancholy air, and then remarked that he feared I was being kept waiting a long time for my lunch.

'Please go on,' I said, 'if you would not rather keep me in the dark altogether until this evening. This is practical.'

psychology with a vengeance ! Does the poison change with the snake's temper ?'

'I—ah—proved that to my satisfaction,' Reay-Carter said, growing more solemn again.

'How ?'

'It is not easy to tell you briefly. I found the minimum lethal dose of poison when acting in the normal way on a rabbit, that is, by the hungry snake striking the rabbit.' The snake was then presumably excited. I also irritated—ah—in fact prodded the snake before letting it strike.'

'And what happened ?'

'A smaller dose had a deadly effect.'

'How did you try it on yourself ?'

The lunch-gong sounded at that moment, but the ladies had not come, and I pressed him to go on.

'I killed a snake rapidly, and so procured poison from the unirritated reptile. A much larger dose of this proved necessary to produce death in the rabbit.'

'And then ?'

'And then, with small doses of this apparently comparatively inert poison I inoculated myself.'

'With what effect ?'

'None whatsoever at first. I proceeded with a view of rendering myself immune, poison-proof, in fact.'

'Did you reach any conclusion ?'

'Oh, certainly. I proved most satisfactorily that, with this comparatively inert poison, the effect is cumulative. It accumulates in the system if injected in small quantities, until at last a serious effect is produced. The symptoms are peculiarly unpleasant, indeed distressing. My own case proved this most satisfactorily.'

'I'm glad you were satisfied,' I said. 'Did you prove anything more ?'

'I have reason to believe,' he said, looking at his watch again—'Really I must apologise for my wife for keeping you so long without lunch—yes—ah, what did I say ? Oh, yes ! I have reason to believe that a lethal dose of this comparatively inert form might be administered under certain conditions, and that death would not supervene for a very long period, many days, indeed. But here are the ladies. I have made your apologies to Dr. Tregenna, my dear.' And Mr. Reay-Carter held open the door, while the cold smile upon his face as he

spoke, made me wonder for the moment whether after all he might not have some sense of humour, as well as scientific courage.

At the lunch-table it occurred to me to ask him whether his experiments had included many varieties of snakes.

'Ah!' he replied, 'I have to be plain upon that point to-night. You will understand that, some time before his death, my late colleague, Professor Grosvenor, came to me with some suggestions and valuable notes on these lines. At the same time he brought me some of the particular variety of snake which he continued to use. This was a water-snake, of which he chanced to have an opportunity of buying a large number from a dealer. He gave me these.'

'Did he give you all?' I asked, in rather a purposeless way.

But Reay-Carter didn't know.

'My late colleague spoke of further experiments at some convenient time,' he said. 'But I heard nothing more.'

'Only think!' cried Mrs Reay-Carter, with a little shudder, 'I went to my husband's laboratory one day, because I wanted a cheque in a hurry, and there was one of those awful things crawling about the floor! I can never go there again.'

'It would be foolish to run unnecessary risks,' Reay-Carter asserted, and added quietly to me that *Anguis fragilis* (the common slow-worm) had been as useful to him for the purposes of quiet experiment as his more dangerous brethren.

After that I felt justified in supposing that my previous impressions of Reay-Carter needed revision.

I felt unwilling to trouble him further about his subject for that evening, and hoped that I should hear then all that I wanted to know, or have a chance afterwards of asking him to tell me more.

I turned to Mrs Reay-Carter, who was giving Miss Verney an animated account of her visit to the Continent, and left her husband to eat his lunch quietly; for although he had said that the experiments had been 'most satisfactory,' I thought from his appearance that 'conclusive' might have been a better word so far as he was concerned, for the result to him didn't seem invigorating, to say the best of it.

The immediate effect of my turning to Mrs Reay-Carter was that she was reminded of the Countess of Jura's hurried visit of the night before. I had to stand a good deal of polite

interrogation, while Miss Verney looked on. I was silly enough to hesitate for a moment when Reay-Carter asked where Lady Jura had found me, but Miss Verney answered for me at once, saying coolly that she had persuaded me to stay for a chat, at which Mrs Reay-Carter, probably remembering to a minute the time at which Lady Jura had called, opened her eyes more widely than ever, but was too polite to express her surprise in words.

This turn in the conversation made me readier to move than if I had felt able to talk on with Reay-Carter alone, and, remembering what Mrs Reay-Carter had said about wanting a good long chat with Miss Verney, I made that my excuse, though it sounded, when I left, as though the chat would be very one-sided.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### RATS AND SNAKES

ON leaving Reay-Carter's house, I did not go straight back, but wandered away alone, thinking what Reay-Carter had been telling me. Sometimes I walked briskly along the road, sometimes I loitered and looked over some roadside gate upon the dreary fields. I wanted badly to talk with Howell, especially since I had heard of Grosvenor's latest work. He had attended Grosvenor at the moment his last illness began to show itself, and although, no doubt, other men had been called in for consultation, he must have been in attendance up to the end.

I soon found that in our part of the world one can't think comfortably with an October wind blowing about one, and I set off at a sharp pace, determined to take up the business again in my own room by the fire.

When I reached the Rookery, however, I was told that someone was waiting for me. At the moment I got the message I was in the common room, helping myself to a cup of tea, and I quite naturally asked who it was. The girl looked about her cautiously before replying, with the only result that MacDougall, who was having some tea close by, leant forward to listen, while two other men stopped talking.

'It's a pollisman!' she said at last, and fled from the shout of laughter that went up from the other men.

'Tree's at it again !'

'Shall I see him, old man ?'

'Will you try to square him, Tree ?'

'Where were you last night ?' And so on, while I went on steadily with my tea, and tried to think what this visit could be about. Unfortunately there was now more than one reason why the police should want to see me—if they only knew.

My first thought was of last night's drunkard. Had he finished his sleep in a police cell and said anything there to awaken suspicion ? If so, here was an end to my career as amateur detective. There were other possibilities, but the strain from one thing and another had begun to tell upon me, I suppose, and I had to own to myself that I couldn't think what was the likeliest cause for this visit. After all, the easiest and the quickest way was to go up and see, so I finished my cup of tea and went off, without any reply to the reminder that a London train would leave very soon, and a bet of level shillings that I should come down with the handcuffs on.

When I went into my room I found that the 'pollisman' who wished to see me was the grey-haired Inspector who had come up on the night of Reid's death, which seemed so long ago now. I nodded to him, and pulling a chair up to the fire for myself, I asked what I could do for him. Over this he seemed to hesitate a little, although he must have had some time in the room alone in which to think over his errand.

I lit a cigarette, simply that I might have something to do, and offered him his choice between a cigarette and a cigar which happened to lie on the mantelpiece. He took the cigar and set to work to snip the end off and to light up before he spoke. Then he explained that he had come to have a chat about Reid's death.

'I thought that was all done with, a month ago,' I said, scarcely knowing if I was glad or not that he had no other errand.

'Ay !' he allowed, 'did you, now ?' and puffed away meditatively again.

'What can I tell ?' I asked. 'What has started this again ?'

'Well,' he returned, 'I've just come along quietly to ask you whether there's anything you would like to tell us about it. Ye see, yon young chap took me in with his knowing ways, and so did you ?'



'I!' I said. 'Why, I scarcely spoke a word!'

'Just so,' he returned, looking critically at his cigar-end with his head on one side. 'But you'd as good a right to speak as he had. I've only lately found out that you and he graduated together that week.'

'I hadn't registered,' I explained. But the Inspector simply shook his head with a knowing smile.

'You couldn't sign a certificate, but maybe you knew as much as t'other, maybe more. You're too modest, and 'tisn't fair to me.'

I couldn't help laughing at this, though I was really getting a bit scared.

'You flatter me,' I told him. 'But I've nothing to tell you. Besides the gentleman you speak of had attended the poor fellow—I hadn't.'

'Before he was qualified, then?' the Inspector said quickly.

'A man's as good just before passing as he is just after,' I told him. 'But what brings this up again?'

He looked at me and then at the fire before answering:

'Well, the fact is I'm not satisfied, and I'm not above asking for help where I think I can get it. If I want information from one sort of body, why, I just send for them to step along to my office, and the look of things frightens them into saying more than they mean when they start. With other folk,' and he nodded at me, 'why, I just step along quietly to them, and sit by their fire and smoke their cigars, and it's more comfortable for both.'

'But why come to me?' I persisted.

'Well, I don't think you're a fool, and I do think you're a gentleman. All I want is to get at the truth, and that won't hurt you, anyhow.'

'What do you suspect?' I asked—I couldn't say 'whom.'

'Drains!' said the Inspector, imperturbably.

'The confidences are all expected to come from me, then?'

'It's drains as much as anything else with me just now. Drains cover most things. They're a great hobby of mine.'

'Well, it may have been drains or anything else, for anything I can swear to,' I said. 'Perhaps I shall have an opinion of my own later on.' And then I added carelessly, 'You don't want to see either of the two men who fetched you, do you?'

He stood up and looked at me.

'No, sir, I do not. What's more, let me remind you offi-

cially that our pleasant little chat is private.' Then suddenly altering his manner, he asked,

'Did you happen to see anything of that drunken row that took place outside here last night?'

'No,' I said. 'I was out all the evening.'

'Ah! I thought you might have been about at the time. A fellow got his head badly cut with a belt. I just looked in to ask you, as I happened to be passing, Doctor.'

'I understand,' I said. 'Is there anything else I can do for you?'

'I wonder, now, is anyone in that room I came to a month ago?'

'No one. The house isn't quite full, and even medicals seem to prefer another room,' I told him.

'Now, I'd like to go in on my way down,' he said, 'if I might trouble you, Doctor.'

I took him to the room, which looked very bare now that it was unoccupied.

He went to the window and admired the view, which was the same as from my room, and then he strolled round, stopping suddenly by the bookshelves which stood against the wall.

'Talking about that hobby of mine,' he said, 'now, I wonder where that hole leads to.'

I went across the uncarpeted floor and looked where he pointed. There certainly was a hole between the floor and what I believe is called the skirting of the wall, but the bookshelves almost hid it.

'It's a rat-hole,' I said. 'I must tell them to have it stopped, but it has no communication with drainage.'

'Rats are bad enough,' he said. 'Nothing to be felt, I suppose?' And going down on his knees, he raked about with his cane, but to no purpose, and he stood meditating over it.

'Yes, better get it stopped,' he said at last, and came thoughtfully down the stair.

At the door he faced round to me suddenly.

'If you can't tell me anything about it, perhaps this gentleman can. Mr. Clegg, isn't it?'

I turned too, and sure enough Clegg was there, having just come out of another room.

'I have been making inquiries, Mr. Clegg,' the Inspector went on coolly, 'about a disturbance that took place outside this house last night—a drunken row that ended in two men

being brought to us. Dr. Tregenna was out, it seems, but perhaps you heard something of it ?'

'I came in just at the end,' Clegg said, quite unsuspiciously. 'They both seemed pretty much cut up, I thought. I didn't see them at it.'

'Thank you, sir,' said the Inspector politely, and wishing us good-night, went off, whereupon I found that it was time to think about dressing for the Tweedies'.

Down at Heriot Row our party at dinner was a small 'one, Maxwell-Farquharson, as Mrs. Tweedie had promised, being the only other guest. I had to give them an account of my chat with Reay-Carter, and by the time I had done that and we had discussed it a little, we were due at the Society's rooms.

The first man I set eyes on when we got there was my visitor of the afternoon. He was no longer in uniform, and stood in the porch, smoking till the last possible minute.

'You here, Inspector ?' I said, as I passed him. 'Are you interested in snakes, then ?'

'Parabolas are my greatest hobby,' he answered gravely, and then threw away the stump of his cigar with a sigh.

'That's the cigar you gave me when I left you,' he said. 'It was a very good one, Doctor. I couldn't wait until after this, when I might have smoked it through.' And shaking his head with a melancholy smile at his own impatience, he gave a last look at the stump as a bare-footed newsboy swooped upon it, and then he came in with the rest.

The doings of the Society are always characterised by their strict decorum, and often, for the profane, by their dullness.

It is not thrilling to sit and listen, without even the solace of a smoke, while some learned gentleman discourses, say, upon a geometrical figure of which you never heard the name before, or upon a metal remarkable for its rarity, and for the very little known about it. Hence it is usually quite easy to get a pass from a member and to find a seat. But to-night Reay-Carter's paper promised to make the meeting more lively, and medical men had turned up in good numbers. In fact, the room was so full that I saw the dignified old President cast dissatisfied glances at the seats where Mrs. Reay-Carter and Mrs. Tweedie sat, in the back row, trying to make themselves as small and inconspicuous as possible, while one or two members had to stand beside them.

The President even consulted with the Secretary, and both,

raising their gold-rimmed glasses, stared fixedly at the intruders. But though the ladies shook, they never budged, and someone having told the short-sighted old gentlemen who these bold women were, they shrugged their shoulders and did nothing more, though I thought that, from the walls where they hung, the past Presidents frowned disapprovingly.

A short and obscure paper opened the meeting. It was something geological, with a map, and was the less interesting because the modest gentleman who read it showed that he was unpleasantly conscious of a room full of people who wished he would finish as quickly as possible.

No discussion followed, and the poor man sank back into his corner, wondering, perhaps, if the pleasure of reading a paper there was so great as he had expected. There was a stir directly Reay-Carter was called upon. The men who had seats settled themselves more comfortably, while those who had none shifted from one foot to the other, and one or two cast envious glances at the ladies who had taken the seats which each man, no doubt, thought would otherwise have been free for him.

Meanwhile, Reay-Carter was arranging the candles and his papers upon the little table, and poking about carefully in his bag, which stood upon the floor, and on which he had kept a watchful eye ever since he came into the room. But at last everything was apparently arranged to his satisfaction, and then, fumbling in his bag once more, he lifted out a long glass bottle, and adroitly slipped a hissing, curling snake upon the table before him.

## CHAPTER XLVII

### WITH THE NIGHTHAWKS

THERE was a movement amongst his audience at this sensational beginning to Reay-Carter's paper. Those in the back seats leant forward, craning over the shoulders of those who sat before them, while those in the front seats seemed more inclined to sit well back as the snake writhed upon the table, and then, raising its head a little, hissed sharply. I leant forward and looked at the reptile closely. It was some two or two and a half feet long, of a silvery grey, with darker transverse bands over

the back and sides. The thing which at first sight struck one as being peculiar was its eel-like tail, which was flattened on both sides.

Meanwhile Reay-Carter stood bending a little over the table, and smiling somewhat sarcastically upon those near him ; but at last, picking up the snake again by a sudden firm grip about the neck, he slipped it back into its bottle and clapped something on the mouth, after which the men in the front benches sat more at their ease, while he proceeded with his paper.

'I feel that I should apologise to this learned Society,' he said, with a stiff bow, 'for this melodramatic opening to what is intended as a strictly scientific address. The reptile I have just shown is perfectly harmless—its poison fangs have been extracted, and it may be handled with as much impunity as an earthworm. My object in producing it is simply to emphasise the facts that the experiments made by my late lamented colleague and myself have been made solely upon one species of snake, the true hydrophid *Hydrus bicolor*, coming from the Indian Ocean. The facts which I lay before you may not, therefore, apply to other species. That has yet to be proved.'

He then went on to relate the results of the experiments started by Grosvenor and carried to their present stage by himself. Slipping the snake into a large glass tank which stood near him, he showed us how its movements, comparatively awkward as it lay on the table, became full of grace as it moved through the water. Screening the tank from the light, he showed us how it instantly became swifter, being a night wanderer and almost blind in a bright light. Then he told us of Forné, of Noumea, who reported the death of a convict through the handling of one of these snakes ; also of Kneeland's weird account of a night's fishing in Manilla Bay, where, after fishing all day with no result, they began, in the darkness of ten o'clock at night, to haul up from the warm, sleepy sea great snakes, ten and twelve feet in length, and had them in the boat, coiling and snapping, before they knew what had happened, and fought there, striking blindly, knowing that a bite meant a quick and painful death, and at last, quitting their boat, jumped overboard and swam to the ship, leaving the snakes in possession until daylight. Also he told us how, like some other marine beasts, they seemed affected by tides, increasing in activity with the crescent moon.

Then he went on to describe the effects of the poison further :

How medical men had discovered that the first effect was exciting. The victim thought himself fit for tremendous tasks, and, indeed, showed great power of mind and muscle for a short time, but gradually weakened, and died convulsed or paralysed. How, by administering small doses at intervals, these effects were delayed and prolonged, and varied to some extent with different individuals.

He passed lightly over his experiments upon himself, but spent some time in speaking of Grosvenor's work and sudden death—

'Cut down,' he said, 'in the midst of a brilliant career, which had promised greater things yet—a martyr to science.'

This I thought startling enough, and bent forward eagerly to hear what should follow. But, after hesitating for a moment, Reay-Carter went on to add Grosvenor's name to the long list of those who had overtaxed their strength in seeking truth.

He had scarcely begun his paper before Howell had come in, evidently straight from the train. Howell came right to the front, and since there was no empty seat, he found a corner behind Reay-Carter, where he could stand without being in the way. He watched Reay-Carter intently, and at the end of the paper went forward and handled the snake, but did not speak upon the paper as I had expected.

Going back to my seat, after looking at the snake, and while Howell was still there questioning Reay-Carter, I saw that Clegg and Muir were both standing near the doorway and watching Howell as closely as he had watched Reay-Carter.

Professor Richie passed out, remarking to a friend, as he did so, that the paper had been 'Interesting, my dear sir, very, and even brilliant! But our late friend was more brilliant than trustworthy, and Reay-Carter naturally gives him all possible praise. Paper a *little* premature, don't you think?'

After waiting to hear if there would be any discussion, and finding that the audience was shy of showing its ignorance, our party slipped out quietly just in time to escape the learned paper on parabolas.

A great many others moved out at the same time, but I was surprised to find that among them went my friend the Inspector, whom I caught in the porch again, a minute later, as we passed.

'What!' I said. 'What about the parabolas, Inspector? You'll miss the point altogether if you don't hear the beginning.'

I thought he seemed a trifle put out at meeting me again, but if so, it was only for the moment.

'I get a little faint,' he told me, 'in those crowded rooms, and I have been obliged to leave. I must get a copy of the transactions, I'm afraid.'

He stopped and looked at me slyly, thumping his breast-pocket.

'Ay, ay! I'm a poor fool. I thought I'd take a daunter about the Calton Hill for a blow in the fresh air before going home—and I've left my cigar-case at the office!'

I laughed, and felt for mine.

'It happens that I've a cigar left of the kind you tried this afternoon. If you found that good enough, and will take this one——'

He didn't leave me in doubt on that point, and took the opportunity of begging a match as well. After which he lit up, and I watched him stroll slowly away, with his head bent and his hands behind his back, before I joined the Tweedies and Maxwell-Farquharson, who were chatting with a couple of other men.

Ten minutes later, Maxwell-Farquharson and I had said good-night to the Tweedies, and were going up the stair that led to the eyrie of the Nighthawks.

The room into which I was taken was not large, and was of the plainest kind. There was no picture upon the walls, there was not a book or magazine or paper in the place. There were two great racks of the longest churchwardens I had ever seen, and I thought the tumblers comfortably and unusually large. The armchairs were roomy and substantial, and there were large tobacco-jars plentifully distributed over the little tables.

It seemed to me that the Nighthawks bid for comfort rather than ostentation. Two elderly birds were enjoying themselves when Maxwell-Farquharson took me in, each with a very long clay in his mouth and a very long tumbler before him, and when Farquharson introduced me they nodded in a cheery way, and pushed over the baccy, so that I also soon had my long clay and my big glass, and felt very comfortable, and ready to chat over things in general with Maxwell-Farquharson. Meanwhile I lazily watched my neighbours, who, to my fancy, seemed very bird-like, although they didn't remind me of hawks.

The elder and smaller man made me think more of an

ancient and rather crotchety cockatoo. He sat hunched up a little, puffing away at his pipe with sharp pulls, and keeping a suspicious eye upon his glass, as though he suspected it of false pretences, while his other eye was cocked occasionally at his neighbour, whom he cross-examined in a high-pitched, querulous voice, with short, sharp questions.

The other man strongly suggested an elderly and very dapper lovebird, if one can be imagined with a big bald head and a well-filled white waistcoat. Far from looking suspiciously at his glass, he watched it lovingly, as though it were an old and tried friend. He puffed away gently at his pipe too, with an appreciative air, while he refused to be hurried or ruffled by the elderly cockatoo's questioning, as was quite right, after all, since from what I heard, he was being examined upon nothing more important than the question of how he had spent his holidays.

As soon as they had fairly started their chat again, Maxwell-Farquharson turned to me in earnest.

'Have you brought anything for me to look at?'

'Yes,' I said. 'I understand from Mrs. Munro that this would be likely to interest you.' And I took from my pocket the sheet of paper with my horoscope upon it.

This I handed to him, and he flattened it out upon the table, and sat looking intently into the signs and figures. Presently he looked up, speaking quietly, while the elderly cockatoo rated his friend rather loudly for having missed staying at a certain hotel in Brussels.

'Mrs. Munro told me last night what she had made out of this. My opinion differs very slightly from hers, in fact, not at all for practical purposes. I can give you another suggestion. When the moon changes, I believe the matter will have ended one way or another for you. Also I think your danger is greater by night than by day, though it is always there.'

'Can you tell me anything more?'

'No.' He shook his head, and giving me back the paper, puffed thoughtfully at his pipe. 'But perhaps it is as well to remind you that from your hand I told you much the same thing as Mrs. Munro has reached in another way. Don't therefore put the question aside in a hurry as being absolute nonsense. There can be no harm in going a little more circumspectly than you generally do for a few days.'

'I'm so cautious that I'm almost timid,' I told him, and I



was speaking the simple truth, though he did laugh at me a little for saying so.

We sat puffing away silently a little while, and then he began talking of Reay-Carter's paper. From that the talk naturally passed on to Grosvenor and his illness and death. I told Maxwell-Farquharson of our last meeting, and he listened carefully, asking particularly about the date and the hour at which I was at Grosvenor's house.

Meanwhile other Nighthawks drifted in, until at last the little room was filled with clouds of tobacco smoke, which only rolled aside here and there to show a face, or a long pipe, or a big glass. Everybody knew Maxwell-Farquharson, and a great many came and spoke to him, so that we could talk no more of my affairs.

I was determined that, to-night at least, I would get to bed before midnight, and telling Maxwell-Farquharson so, I rose to come away.

'Quite right to keep good hours,' he told me, 'most of all just now; but I'll come part of the way with you.'

As we moved out, I caught sight of Caird, whose voice I had recognised among the rest, without being able, in the smoke, to see his face. We had drifted apart lately, and I was glad of the chance to stop and speak to him for a moment.

'When are you coming up again, old man?' he asked. 'I shall be off in a few days for a month.'

I thought a moment.

'To-morrow morning, if I may,' I told him. 'But we won't make it an appointment. I may be busy, and so may you. When I'm free I'll look you up, and if you're free, you'll let me in. Have you anything jolly for me to see?'

'Joan of Arch is finished,' he told me, 'all but a touch or two. Another sitting will do it when she comes back.'

'She isn't away,' I said. 'I lunched with her to-day at the Reay-Carters.'

'Oh yes, she is,' he returned. 'Went off to-night for a week. I got a note from her before I came out this evening.'

'To-morrow morning, then,' I said, and we nodded good-night.

In such moonlight as there was that evening it was impossible for me to forget Maxwell-Farquharson's warning, however much I might want to laugh at it. The superstitions of my forefathers stirred in me, and Maxwell-Farquharson and I

walked silently side by side down the street. At last I blurted out what I believe was in his mind as well as in my own :

‘My blood is fighting hard against my training, and against what I should call my common-sense, if that didn’t seem to imply want of it in you. My blood shall have its own way for once. Many things make me too tired to be logical. Can you help me no further in a shot at my danger? What is it? Which way does it come?’

We were then in Princes Street, and a crowd of loungers in the moonlight rather jostled us.

‘Let us cross over,’ he said. ‘You have an ulster on. Five minutes on one of those seats won’t hurt either of us.’

We crossed and sat down on an empty bench, after which he leant forward, tracing figures on the pavement with his stick, and muttering to himself in a way which was a habit with him when he was thinking deeply.

He looked up in a little while, and turned his face to mine, but for the moment his eyes were fixed and expressionless. Presently, however, he gave a little shiver, and went on talking as though there had been no pause :

‘Whether I can help you further, depends very much upon yourself. I can try, but I can’t tell what the result will be. Will you come down to my rooms?’

‘If you wish me to, I will,’ I told him. ‘But I’m very nearly asleep. If you want me to do anything, or to think, I’m quite useless.’

‘True’ he said thoughtfully. ‘That might spoil it. Will you come down at this time to-morrow night?’

‘I will,’ I promised. ‘I shall be all right again after one good night’s sleep.’ And we parted, but on turning—I don’t know why—to look back, I saw that he stood watching me in the moonlight until I could see him no longer. Then I went straight to my room as I had promised.

## CHAPTER XLVIII

## \* A DREAMER OF DREAMS

I WAS fated, however, as usual, not to get to bed yet a while.

Directly I went into my room, I saw a letter lying upon my table, with everything cleared away from round about it, so that it must be noticed at once.

I picked it up and looked at the address, but didn't know the writing. Then I turned it over, and found it sealed and that the seal was a crest. All this I did in an idle way that is a trick of mine, trying to find out the writer by the outside, but this I couldn't do; and then I opened it. It was from Lord Jura, and ran as follows :—

'MY DEAR DOCTOR—I came up to-night to offer you a sincere and personal apology, and have waited some time. But no one can tell me where you are or how late you may be, and I must not stay longer.

'I have no intention of pretending that I was not puzzled and angry last night, for I was both. I can only ask you to receive my apology as willingly as I offer it. Our engagements to-morrow prevent me from calling on you again during the day, which I should otherwise most certainly do; but I feel it due to myself, as well as to you, to make another effort to catch you to-morrow night. This I shall do, unless you are willing to simplify matters by giving us the pleasure of seeing you where you were so inhospitably received before, and where both Lady Jura and I have apologies and an explanation, however poor, ready for you—also, of course, a dinner and a bed. If you cannot or will not come out, I must certainly come in; but we are both very anxious to see you here, and you will do me a favour if you waive ceremony thus far.

'If you let me have a wire to tell me that you can come, I will send in a trap to fetch you at six o'clock.

'Yours very truly,  
'JURA.'

Over this letter I stood frowning. I would, in any case, break no engagement to come and go at their desire, and therefore they would not see me to-morrow night. Neither

would I make any engagement for the following day. I was for the moment more than half inclined to be silent and let Lord Jura call or not as he chose. Finally, however, it seemed to me that if I let him call again to no purpose to-morrow night, I should be putting myself in the wrong, and so I wrote, although with very ill grace, and growling to myself as I did so :

‘ MY LORD—In reply to your note that I have just read, my engagements already made for to-morrow night prevent me from considering your invitation. The same reason, if you called, would make your journey a useless one, which I should regret. Since my movements for the next few days will be undecided, I can suggest no time for meeting you, and imagine that the matter had better be allowed to stand for the time. But if we meet later on, I think that our appointment had better be anywhere else rather than at your house, which has unpleasant recollections for me.

‘ I am, my Lord,  
‘ Your obedient Servant,  
‘ RICHARD TREGENNA.’

On reading it over, I suspected this to be a churlish way of taking his letter, for I have always felt that a sincere and unasked apology should at once blot out almost anything ; but I was still sore and very sleepy, so in the end the letter as it stood was sealed and directed, and I went downstairs to post it and get it out of my hands and off my mind.

As I passed out, I heard the sound of angry voices in the dining-room, but I didn’t pay much attention, and went away down the road.

It seemed impossible nowadays for me to reach my bed before midnight. Even now the clocks began to strike twelve, ringing out clearly through the almost silent streets, and I yawned pitifully. If this sort of thing went on many days longer, I thought, I should have to take another holiday before starting to serious work, and quickening my pace, I went in again.

The wrangling was still going on in the dining-room, and, growling at all such cross-grained fools—I myself, of course, being in the sweetest of tempers—I went in to see what was going on.

Three voices were going together when I heard them first, but one had silenced the other two, and when I got into the room I found that one was Clegg’s.

He was unmercifully rating MacDougall, who sat open-mouthed before him, while Muir, who looked as though he had been in for it too, was scowling a little way farther down the table, where they had all three been having their supper.

'You pitiful, whining hound,' Clegg went on, 'are we never to hear the last of your miserable complaints? Are you the only man in trouble, do you think, in the place? As for your hints of what's coming, I'm sick of them. They don't interest me. I don't want to know of anything you have in hand.' If you *must* talk of what you mean to do, talk straight, can't you? I'd rather you didn't talk at all.'

'Are you to be the only one to talk in this place?' put in Muir.

The only answer was a tumbler swept up from the table and slung straight at his head. It whizzed past his ear as he rocked aside, and crashed to splinters on the wall behind him as he rose from his chair. "

'What the devil do you mean by that?' he asked, his face several shades paler than usual.

'You asked me a question,' Clegg replied savagely. 'That's my answer. Do you understand it?' and he laid his hand on another tumbler as he spoke.

'Two can play at that game,' Muir growled.

'Can they? We'll see who can play longest,' Clegg retorted, and he lifted the glass as he spoke, but Muir moved slowly and sullenly from the room. MacDougall had already gone, and presently I watched Clegg to his door, not thinking this the right moment to preach.

I went to bed at last, but even then I was not allowed to sleep. I had not been lying quiet for more than five minutes before there was a tap at my door. I shouted 'Come in!' and sat up in my bed, wondering sleepily what on earth was going to happen now. Then a tall, shadowy figure came in, and was at my bedside before I discovered that it was Clegg. One can easily see what a shaky state my nerves were in when I confess that I shrank away a little, though not enough for him to notice, and held myself half on guard.

'Turn on the light, please, if you want to talk,' I said, and he did so, and then came and sat on the foot of my bed.

'When are we going to the Turnbulls?' he asked fretfully. And I was so struck by the absurdity of the contrast between my own feelings and his errand, that I laughed out aloud.

'Do you come mysteriously at midnight to ask me no more than that?' I asked. But he eyed me sullenly.

'You think yourself d——d funny, I suppose, with your sarcasm and your pretensions to be witty. You'll go too far some day, I warn you, and then you'll be sorry.'

'Shall I?' I said, savagely enough, in reply. 'Are you going to make me sorry? Do you suppose you're free to come in, any night, and any time you please, to rouse me up and ask silly questions. If you expect——'

I stopped short, recollecting myself as I roused up, and sat still, while Clegg watched me, breathing hard.

'I've said more than I meant,' I told him at last. 'You're always welcome, Clegg, if you've anything you want to speak about.'

I thought he would be equally ready to make it up, but he was quite silent and still for a little, and then drew a long, loud breath, as a man might who had been using all his strength in a sudden effort.

'Don't let us quarrel,' was all, however, that he said, and I agreed, and made up my mind to say no more about it and to take no notice of anything nasty from him, although I thought he might have owned himself the first to begin this time.

'What about going to the Turnbells?' I asked. 'You want to go soon, do you?'

'Yes. I want to get out of all this for a day or two. It's just sickening me. There's MacDougall always either groaning over himself, as if he were the biggest martyr ever born, or else going about like an amateur Guy Fawkes in an opera, full of mystery, and dying to tell you about it all the time.'

I couldn't help smiling at this, though it was irritating Clegg evidently almost beyond endurance, but he drew another deep breath and went on more fiercely than ever:

'Then there's that cur, Muir. I know his game, the sneak! He's dropped the girl he was a year engaged to, but he hasn't got what he wants yet, whatever he may think. I can't bear the sight of the conceited fool!'

'He goes off in less than a week,' I reminded Clegg. 'He told me that his people were on their way home.'

Clegg nodded gloomily.

'I know that. I wish to heaven they lived anywhere else rather than Edinburgh. But that's another reason for keeping

out of his way now. If you can't go down to the Turnbulls' soon, I must go off for a week somewhere else. What can you do?'

'I can't go to-morrow by any possibility. I've an appointment in the evening. But I'll tell you what we'll do, if you like. I'll write a card now, if you'll post it, asking them to expect us early the day after to-morrow to shoot through the day. Will that do?'

'I suppose it must,' he said, and getting him to bring 'me pen and paper to the bedside, I wrote a card to George, telling him of our plan, and asking him to wire if it wouldn't suit him. With this Clegg went off, wishing me good-night, and muttering, as he went, something about being a snappish fool who didn't deserve to be treated decently—to which I just answered with a laugh and a word. I resolved, however, to keep an eye on him for the next day or two, or better still, if possible, to leave him behind me for a week at Tweedside; and then, this time, I really went to sleep.

'To sleep, perchance to dream.' Yes, there was the trouble, and I doubt whether sleep such as mine was worth having.

At first it was, as usually on my bad nights, a mere confused mass of shadows, with, over all, a sense of coming horror which I could not escape. Then the floating shadows became more distinct, and I saw here and there a face. First the face of the dead girl whom I had last seen in the post-mortem theatre, but it was grinning horribly, and an outstretched hand beckoned me to her side. Next it was standing in the Tweed, and between me and the shore floated the body I had seen there, and it stretched out cold fingers which I could not avoid. Then Reid arose, playing his fiddle, and every note drew me nearer to him, while he glared and grinned and wept. After him came Grosvenor, beckoning me to him with one hand, while with the other he vainly tried to tear away a snake that writhed about his neck, and I could see the shapes of Muir and Clegg swaying to and fro as they fought behind him.

All this passed. The mists that had always veiled these things rolled away, and I stood alone and at night on the south shore of the Forth. The full moon shone over me and was reflected from the water below. The sea was calm, but below the dark surface I could see rings and flashes of phosphorescence, and could make out the great sea-snakes, twisting and

fighting, while here a clenched hand, and there a bare, white shoulder gleamed between.

Then I thought that I looked aside, and found Reid standing by me, and he laughed, and, raising his violin, began to play his last impromptu. At every note the snakes fought more fiercely, until the sea boiled with them, and, looking out, I saw that the Inchkeith light was travelling swiftly toward us. Then I tried to turn and run, but my feet dragged slowly up the shore, while I looked over my shoulder at the coming light. And as it drew nearer, the light took shape and divided, and I saw that it was the light of two eyes, cold and unwinking, which looked out of the sphinx face of old dreams. But the forehead was flattened back, the neck showed scaly in the moonlight, and swept down into the coils of the snake-body which writhed through the water and hissed over the sand behind me, while, from beneath the curling, quivering upper lip, shot two long poison-fangs.

Then I awoke shouting, and lay with the shrill note of the violin still in my ears, and the snake face still floating before my eyes. I turned in my bed, and then sprang up like a flash, for there, though the dream had gone where dreams go, was still a shadow, a something standing between the two windows, against the wall.

'Who are you?' I shouted. 'Speak, or by Heaven you'll repent it!'

Then out of the shadow came a low, grating laugh, and the figure moved, till it stood between my bed and the window. It was Clegg again.

## CHAPTER XLIX

### HYDROPHIDS AND BENZOLINE

I WAS in no way relieved on seeing who it was that stood there in the moonlight. Old suspicions returned, and I called again at once, to ask what he was doing there, shifting at the same time to be ready for anything.

'I came back for my stylograph,' he answered quickly. 'You used it a couple of hours ago, and I left it here. One can't wake you: you sleep like the dead!' And he laughed again, standing there in the half light.



'But why do you come into a man's room at this time?' I asked. 'Am I never to sleep?'

'Why don't you lock your door if you're frightened?' he said sharply, and went away.

But I jumped off my bed at once, and, throwing my dressing-gown about me, followed him barefooted along the passage and down the stair to his own room. When I heard his door close, I stole up to it and listened. He was moving about the room, laughing a little now and then, and at last I heard the noise of a chair drawn to the table, followed by the shuffling of papers. In the midst of the noise made by his crossing the room I softly turned the handle of the door, but the door, as I had suspected, was locked. But I could not rest contented with knowing that. I went softly back to my room, and slipping into flannels, put my dressing-gown over them, and then made my way to Reid's old room, which was immediately under Clegg's.

There I lay in a long chair, every now and then looking curiously at the hole behind the bookshelves, and able to hear the movement every time Clegg walked across the room, and there I stayed until the servants began to move about the house. Then I heard his bed creak as he threw himself down on it, when I went back to my own room, and, taking his advice about locking my door, I too fell asleep.

When I awoke again I lay thinking more about myself than about anyone else. Clearly I was getting nervous and suspicious of everybody. I scarcely seemed to know whom to trust or what to do, and, like Clegg, I longed for a day in the open air, out of this network of worries and shadows. I was rather late for breakfast, and as I passed down the stair, I met the carpenter, who was doing some odd jobs about the place, and taking him into Reid's room—as it was still always called—I showed him the hole in the floor, and gave orders for it to be stopped up at once. Going on again, I met Muir just going out, and wishing to be decent with him after last night's squabble, especially as I knew he would only be staying a few days longer, I wished him good-morning, and was passing on, when he stopped me.

'What's going to be done about that lunatic?' he said, watching the stair as though he thought that Clegg might at any moment come down and renew the quarrel.

'Whom do you mean?' I asked stiffly.

‘Clegg, of course! You’re his friend. Do you mean to wait until he has killed someone before interfering?’

‘If you wish to apologise for your share of what happened last night,’ I said, ‘I shall be very glad to press him to accept your apology.’

But at this Muir simply frowned, and went away with a muttered remark about making Clegg pay for it; and I went in and got breakfast.

After I had finished breakfast and lounged about for a minute or two, I found that it was past ten o’clock, and decided to call on Reay-Carter at his laboratory, and run the risk of being snubbed. It was a place where I had never worked, and which was quite strange to me. I was therefore rather unpleasantly surprised when the first thing I saw was that Muir was there, helping Reay-Carter with some crucibles and other heating apparatus.

On seeing me, Reay-Carter came forward quite affably, although I know that, as a rule, he naturally hated anyone to visit him there. I think that he had been pleased at the interest that I had shown in his paper of the night before, and this made me less scrupulous about worrying him now, so I plunged at once into the matter that had brought me there.

‘I’m very much ashamed to bother you, Mr. Reay-Carter, but what you told me last night, beside what I heard from you in the morning, has interested me so much that I want to know if I may ask you a few more questions.’

Reay-Carter shook hands, and said he would be pleased to answer any questions I chose to ask, if he were able.

‘You’re sure that you can spare me ten minutes?’ I asked.

‘I shall be delighted to give you twenty,’ he answered politely, looking at the clock as he did so. ‘Dr. Muir, you understand the working of this experiment, and can continue it to a certain point without me. If Dr. Tregenna and I are still chatting in twenty minutes, kindly call me.’

Muir and I nodded to one another, and then Reay-Carter and I moved down the long room together.

‘You know my assistant?’ he asked.

‘He’s one of our men,’ I told him. ‘But I know very little of his work, and I didn’t know he was with you just now.’

‘He has done special work here during the vacation,’ Reay-Carter answered. ‘He is a great help to Dr. Muir, taking

that intelligent interest in his work which is so essential to success.'

We had moved from one end of the room to the other, and now stood before a large glass tank, partially darkened, in which half a dozen hydrophids of different sizes were swimming or lying apparently asleep.

'With regard to your experiments,' I said, 'in the case of these snakes, you told me yesterday that some of your observations had been made upon yourself.'

Reay-Carter nodded 'Quite true,' and murmured to himself, 'The most satisfactory,' at which I think I smiled a little, but went on :

'May I ask, have you experimented at all on other people ?'

He shook his head sadly.

'It would have been most useful, but I have found no one sufficiently enthusiastic.'

'Not even Dr. Muir ?' I said, laughing. 'And was Professor Grosvenor equally unfortunate ? He made some experiments upon himself, didn't he ?'

But Reay-Carter seemed to become reticent when Grosvenor's experiments were touched upon.

'I am not acquainted,' he said, 'with all particulars of my late colleague's experiments. It is difficult, indeed impossible, for me to say precisely in what manner they were conducted. I can obtain further information upon that point, perhaps, if I think it essential.'

'You do not happen to know, even, whether he performed his experiments unassisted ?' I said, but Reay-Carter shook his head again, and after some general chat upon poisons, I thanked him and came away.

After leaving Reay-Carter, I went away through the chill streets, no longer brightened by summer toilettes, and climbed to Caird's studio. I found him going over 'Joan of Arc,' but, as usual, he insisted that he was not busy, and that he could do what he was about and chat at the same time. So I sat down and watched him put in a touch here and a touch there, strengthening what seemed to me already perfect, and came away, to wonder what could be gained by another sitting.

Then I walked for an hour, and watched the leaves whirl down from the trees and fly through the streets on the October wind. I thought of the next day's shooting, and of the new gun I meant to try, and hoped that Maxwell-Farquharson, in

his kind—but I expected useless—attempts to help me, would not keep me up very late ; for I was keen on shooting decently, and found that by daylight I expected very much less from the night's experiment than I did when darkness made all things mysterious and possible.

When I got back for lunch it was still rather early, and I found that MacDougall was the only man at the table. He was eating hurriedly, and looked up in a startled way when I walked into the room. Presently he finished, and got up at once to go away, having, indeed, his mouth full when he left the table. Standing at the door he turned and spoke:

'Come up to my room, Tree, will you, when you're finished?'

'What for?' I asked, looking up from the paper I had begun to read.

'I've got proofs to show you.'

'Proofs be hanged!' I said. 'If you want me to see them, bring them down now. I'm going out again soon.'

'Bring 'em down!' he repeated. 'That's all well enough, but we shall have Clegg in again presently, and I don't want another row like last night's, if you do!'

'I don't either,' I said. 'But this room is common property, and we shan't talk to him—unless you want to.'

'Not I! I'm going to put Weir and Bain on him. He shall smart, I can tell you. I'll have nothing more to say to him.'

'We'll talk about that in committee,' I told him. 'Are you afraid to do it yourself?'

'I'll use the best means I can get, just as he used the tumbler last night.' And with that he made off, just as Clegg came in.

He sat down and made no reference to the night before, but began talking about the morning train, and the need for going out to order more cartridges.

'I'll go with you,' I said. 'I want a few more.'

I thought that as far as possible I would keep him with me that day, and accordingly, after lunch we started away together.

We ordered our cartridges, and then turned along Princes Street, and we had not gone far before I found that someone was signalling to me from a cab. It was Mrs. Munro, and, asking Clegg to go on slowly, I went to her.

'How are you?' she said at once. 'Has anything happened yet?'

'Nothing,' I told her, and then I added, laughing, 'Don't you think the stars have done their worst and failed?'

'Have you seen Mr. Maxwell-Farquharson?' was all her reply.

'Yes,' I said, 'and perhaps it will please you to know that I shall see him again to-night.'

'Yes, I am very glad,' she told me. 'Let me see you, or hear from you, again soon. I mustn't keep you from your friend now.' And we parted.

I had not gone ten yards, and Clegg was still in front of me, when I met Mrs. Reay-Carter. She was coming out of a confectioner's shop and spoke to me, so that I had to stop.

'Wasn't it delightful last night, Dr. Tregenna? So creepy, especially that live snake! Isn't my husband horribly clever and cold-blooded and scientific? I declare I'm afraid to sit down to dinner with him now! I won't let him pour me out so much as a glass of water.'

But I was staring at something that peeped out from her muff. The paper was partly pushed off a bottle, and I could not take my eyes from the peculiarly-cut little stopper, indented at the top.

'I'd be still more afraid, if I were you, to carry that bottle about,' I told her, and pointed to it.

She moved as if to cover it, but it was too late, and her hand dropped again.

'What do you mean?'

'Only that I saw bottles with those stoppers in the laboratory a few hours ago,' I told her. 'And they held the snake's poison you object to so much, diluted with alcohol.'

It seemed to me for an instant that Mrs. Reay-Carter's celebrated smile had something a trifle forced about it, but if so, it was only for an instant.

'Many thanks,' she said. 'How clever of you to notice that, and how good of you to speak! But the bottle was given to me quite new and clean, and there's only benzoline in it. It mustn't get mixed up with the others, though, must it now?' and she nodded good-bye and stepped toward her carriage.

I opened the door for her, and was lifting my hat as I turned away, when she called me back.

'There's no need, of course, to speak of this bottle, Dr. Tregenna. It's Mr. Reay-Carter's one little weakness. He

doesn't like even empty bottles taken from the laboratory. It might get Dr. Muir into trouble.'

'It wouldn't occur to me to speak of it, Mrs. Reay-Carter,' I said. 'I only wanted to warn you, so that there might be no mistake.' Then I came away and thought no more about it.

Presently I met Clegg, who had gone to the end of Princes Street and was on his way back again. His spirits seemed to improve with the prospect of to-morrow's shooting, and he chatted away about it quite gaily, offering me even shillings on his getting the first bird of the three, and again on his getting best or second best bag.

Just before we turned homeward, we met Maxwell-Farquharson. He was going along, staring blankly in front of him, and did not see us even when Clegg, laughing, stepped in front of him. He merely turned aside with a sort of apologetic bow, and was passing on when Clegg caught him by the arm. Then a look of recognition gradually dawned in his eyes, and he shook hands with both of us, laughing at his own absent-mindedness.

'Absent-mindedness is what you'd call it, I suppose,' he said. 'I call it concentration; but the street isn't the right place for that sort of thing, I grant you.'

Then fixing his eyes intently on mine,

'I'm to see you to-night?'

'Yes, I'm coming down, unless you've changed your plans,' I told him; to which he answered that he had made no other engagement and would not think of doing so; and we left him to his thoughts or dreams, whichever they might be.

Clegg and I sat side by side at dinner that night, and it was a quiet meal, for whatever threats Muir and MacDougall chose to make when Clegg was out of the way, they sang very small while he was within hearing. We took our coffee together after dinner, and then I proposed another stroll until it should be time for me to meet Maxwell-Farquharson. I should have to leave him then, and I wanted him to get sleepy first and be willing to go straight off to bed on reaching his room.

So we went out, and strolled down across the Meadows and around by the garden side of Princes Street. Nothing particular happened all the way, except that at one street corner we found—what is a common sight in Edinburgh—a little knot of people gathered about a woman who was preaching vehemently,

and warning them to repent of their sins before it should be too late. At her shrill words of warning Clegg hurried on, and I was not anxious just then to hear more.

I went with him to the door, and having had his promise that he would go straight to bed, so that he might be in good form the next morning, I left him and went down to visit Maxwell-Farquharson.

## CHAPTER I

### WHITE MAGIC

IN one of the most sober, respectable, and even conventional terraces of Edinburgh, with an advocate upon the one side of him and a professor of Divinity upon the other, Maxwell-Farquharson lives his lonely life. Two old family servants form his household and do all that he requires. This, I believe, as a rule, is not very much, for he is a man with simple tastes. Any friend dropping in upon him at odd times in the evening is likely to find him in his study, surrounded by books and documents piled on the desks and tables and tossed upon the floor, lying wherever he can most conveniently get at them for the moment.

These he puts aside readily enough at your coming, and producing whisky and cigars, will make you welcome and entertain you as long as you choose to stay, going back to his work, to all appearance, with equal readiness at whatever time in the small hours you may tear yourself away. You are not likely, I can assure you, to hurry off, for you may choose your own topic, and Maxwell-Farquharson is likely to tell you something of interest thereon.

I have often wondered where he got all his out-of-the-way knowledge, and having got it, how and where on earth he keeps it—the store is so huge; but, whatever the source, it seems always at the service of all comers. If he have a fault, it is one which a very large number of people will consider a virtue. He is a hot politician, and in politics he glories in being a staunch Conservative, and he is not ready to believe that anyone but a fool or a knave can ever think of any other party, except with contempt. One of my many failings, in his opinion,

is that I have no great faith\* in any political party, and see a great deal which sometimes amuses and sometimes disgusts me in all. It was the kinder of him, therefore, to in any way interest himself in my affairs.

But as I went down to his house that evening, I confess that my-steps wavered for a while. I believe that I have a fairly keen sense of the ludicrous, and ludicrous it seemed to be—even to impossibility—that I, a young medical man of the nineteenth century, and the latter part of it, too, should sally out with the idea of being helped by Maxwell-Farquharson's occult knowledge to a clearer sight of a danger which very likely didn't exist.

I laughed at myself—I sneered—and I went on.

I might be a fool, I very likely was, but at any rate I had asked Maxwell-Farquharson to help me, and he had promised to try, and had also probably been put to personal inconvenience in obliging me. I must keep this appointment. I tried, too, to argue that it was impossible to foresee what Maxwell-Farquharson's methods would be, and that, in thinking of them, it was silly to use the expression 'occult.' It might be nothing more, I told myself, than his keen intuition, his power of putting two and two together. But I failed to convince myself of that, and when I reached his door at last, I was convinced that I was going to take part in something curious, if not helpful.

I found him, as usual, in his study, but not at his ordinary occupations. He sat idle at his desk, his hands lying open upon his knees, as though thinking about nothing and doing nothing in particular.

He rather vexed me while shaking hands by asking with a smile if I thought I had put aside my doubts, for the time, enough to push my inquiries further. However, I was frank, and confessed that I was wondering how much my faith would be tested.

'Not very far,' he told me. 'We should differ in our explanations of what I propose doing, but we won't dispute about that. However, I intend to explain a little before we go further, so that as far as possible we may be in sympathy. Take a cigarette,' and he pointed to some lying at my elbow.

I picked one up and put it between my lips, but at once took it out again, and, sniffing, looked at it with suspicion, while Maxwell-Farquharson laughed.

'You're quite right,' he said. 'Your nose has not deceived



you at all. There's opium in it, and much more than one usually finds in any cigarette.

'Do you wish me to smoke it?' I asked. 'On the whole, I'd rather keep my head clear.'

'I'd like you to smoke it if you don't mind,' he persisted. 'It will make things easier for both of us, and since I mustn't smoke just now, I can keep a clear head for both. You're safe under my roof, you know.'

'Of course,' I said, and lit up at once, leaning back in the chair afterwards and puffing away contentedly, while Maxwell-Farquharson chatted on :

'A great deal of what I propose doing presently will strike you at once as being calculated to excite the imagination and concentrate attention. That is quite true, and you will, I am sure, see the importance of following my directions closely, so that what we aim at shall be reached.'

'Let myself go, in fact?' I said.

'Yes. Look upon it as a hypnotic experiment, or what you will, but let it be thorough. Do not, for the moment, allow yourself to question the use of details. Some of them will seem less useful to you than to me, but let that pass for the time.'

The first effect of the opium began to make itself felt, and my brain seemed to rouse itself in an unusual way. Maxwell-Farquharson's words were printing themselves on my mind as a seal might print on hot wax : I seemed to feel them rather than to hear them, and a great rush of ideas, too magnificent for any words that I knew, flashed through my mind and were gone.

He went on, watching me attentively as he spoke :

'The truly scientific man is always ready to own that many things are, though he cannot explain them, and that he is constantly seeing or hearing of other things whose very existence he had never dreamt of before.'

The problem of all things seemed plain to me ; my head was among the stars, while my eyes probed the depths of the seas and understood all their mysteries. It seemed to me that since I had lit my cigarette ages had passed in a flash, and I looked with surprise at the little stump between my fingers. I knew all because I remembered all, having in me the memories of all time. I looked up to tell Maxwell-Farquharson this, but he nodded.

'I know,' he said. 'Come with me !' and I followed him from the room.

The house was silent, except for the solemn ticking of the great clock in the hall, which to me sounded like the tramp of armies.

As we passed through the hall, Maxwell-Farquharson caught up a lamp that was burning there, and then led the way downstairs into the basement.

Here, at the end of a long stone-paved passage, which, no doubt, led to the kitchen and pantries, we came to a locked door, and this he opened, as well as another baize-covered one just inside the first. We were then in a small wainscoted room, where another lamp burnt, and which was full of a faint resinous perfume. A few books stood on shelves. I seemed to take all their titles in at one glance, and saw that they were old and new, all dealing with what I was accustomed to class together as superstitions. There were fifteen books, I remember, and so keen were my senses for the time that I can still recollect without any effort the fifteen titles, and the order in which the books stood.

Here Maxwell-Farquharson told me to stay, and passed through another door on the opposite side of the room.

I stood analysing the taste of the cigarette, which still lingered in my mouth, and came to the conclusion that, besides opium, there had been a certain proportion of *Cannabis Indica*, that is, Indian hemp. My pulse, I found, was a hundred, whereas it usually beats seventy to the minute. Magnificent ideas and stupendous plans leapt through my brain and startled me with their splendour, but all through it my inner self sat calm and analytical, and at the time I was satisfied that my conclusions were logical and all these vast schemes capable of execution.

Then the inner door half opened, and Maxwell-Farquharson called me in a low voice, and shut the door behind me as I passed in.

I stood in a room larger than the one I had just left, with the walls, ceiling, and floor painted a dull black. There was no trace of furniture anywhere. A curtain hung against the wall at one point, over a little recess. On the black floor a large square had been drawn, apparently with chalk, and in each corner of the square was a cross and a triangle. A circle, described within it, touched the four sides of the square, and within that was a smaller circle which contained a tripod and a dish where charcoal burnt, and from which came the perfume I had noticed more faintly in the other room.

He led me within the circle, and softly telling me to stand there, he threw something on to the charcoal pan. It flashed up for an instant only, and then sent out great clouds of thick, aromatic smoke, which rolled about us and filled the room. The flash showed up Maxwell-Farquharson as he stood erect beside me, clothed from head to foot in black, with a strangely-figured band about his waist, and holding in his hand a thin, black, polished rod. He was not looking at me, but stared intently across the room, muttering in a tongue that was strange to me. Then the flame died down, the smoke swept about us, and I could see him no more, though I could still hear him muttering beside me, and he kept his left hand upon my arm.

After that came a low sound, faint at first, but growing clearer and clearer, as though a thousand wings beat the air. The thick smoke swirled and eddied to and fro, as if it were swept by passing crowds, and then, as Maxwell-Farquharson again threw something on the fire, it flared up brightly, casting a strong light through the room for some minutes, and I saw that we were no longer alone.

At first I saw merely that the smoke curled and twisted into strange shapes, and I watched them curiously as they swung round. Then I noticed that they never came nearer to us, but always beat and tossed about the circle, and presently I saw, here a face, there a tossing hand, until at last the whole room was shown, thronged with flying figures that swept about the circle as waves might eddy around a lighthouse, and fell back from it like spray.

Not one of them spoke ; there was no sound in the room but the rush through the air, and the low voice of Maxwell-Farquharson in its persistent monotone of invocation.

Then the forms fell away to right and left, leaving one standing alone, lightly as a bubble might, just outside the circle.

It was a woman, or a goddess, I knew not which ; but I knew the face to be the one that had haunted all my happiest dreams, to be lost and forgotten in my first waking moments, the face of past and happier ages and births. In her slender body was all the joy and youth of spring ; her face was dawn ; and the dark eyes that she turned to me had all the gloom and mystery of a cloudy night. On either side of her the divided throng of forms and faces rose like a double wall, and I knew that to step outside the circle meant death, swift and sharp ; but

what cared I? She stretched out her hands to me in dumb entreaty, and I moved to meet her, as I would have moved though a wall of fire had been between us.

But, at the first step I made, I felt Maxwell-Farquharson's fingers tighten on my arm. I fought against him by the flame of the glowing charcoal, and strained to reach the entreating figure, while all the other forms thronged, with parted lips and eager eyes, to watch us. But something crippled me; I was powerless to throw off his grip; and with the sudden rush of a cold wind, the room emptied and the flame died down, until there was just a little steady glow of light in the circle where we stood.

I sank on my knees, giddy and breathless, while Maxwell-Farquharson's voice rolled above me, monotonous and unceasing, and then, as he threw more fragrant powder on the fire, another flash was followed as before by thick smoke. He spoke no more now, and I could hear nothing but his quick panting breath as he stood over me. Presently, in a low voice he told me to stand and look into the smoke, and struggling to my feet, I did so.

Then the smoke was stilled, and I looked, as it might be, into a smoky blank mirror. Later, in this also, shadowy forms came and went, passing like clouds; and then suddenly the face of the smoke-mirror became broken, and tossed as the sea might when some great thing stirred beneath it.

'Now!' I heard the voice of Maxwell-Farquharson in my ear, and at that moment the smoke was swept aside again, and again a single, changing face fronted me.

At first it was the sphinx face, calm and cold and cruel, and then with a smile the curling lips opened and the poison fangs showed between, and then—with one moment's pause, in which I shaped a face that I knew and dismissed it—Mrs. Reay-Carter rose and stood smiling languidly at me with the stoppered bottle in her hand, whereat I shook with hysterical laughter, and the whole phantasmagoria faded away, while the light died out and the whole room was dark, with no sound but that of Maxwell-Farquharson's voice as, slowly and solemnly, he spoke words of command and dismissal.

## CHAPTER LI

## TWEEDSIDE AGAIN

WHEN at last Maxwell-Farquharson allowed me to leave the circle and took me away, locking the door carefully behind him, I was still giggling almost hysterically at the result of our performance. For such intense excitement as I had felt to end in the appearance of such a fashionable personage as Mrs. Reay-Carter, struck me as being absolutely ludicrous—the height of absurdity. I was roused and excited, too, by other mixed and utterly contradictory feelings. I was mad that I had not reached the vision which had tempted me so alluringly, and at the same time I was mad at believing that it was a mere hallucination, the child of a brain disordered by opium and heaven knew what besides—for I had no doubt that the smoke rose from narcotics thrown upon the fire, which affected me the more readily because of my cigarette.

Maxwell-Farquharson, however, took no notice of my laughter, but led me up the stair, through the hall, and into a small room, where there was a pleasant fire, and where the table was spread with a very substantial cold supper, which looked the more tempting because of the handsome silver and the rich colouring of the decanters against the white cloth.

On this display Maxwell-Farquharson cast a most business-like eye, and invited me to sit down and join him.

‘I counted upon your staying for a chat and some supper,’ he told me, ‘though I warn you there’ll be more supper than chat for me in the next half-hour.’

‘Has your work downstairs given you such an appetite?’ I asked him, half laughingly.

‘Twenty-four hours’ fasting has,’ he said grimly, and moved to the head of the table, pointing to another place laid for me.

But at first I wished to excuse myself. My head was aching, and as I told him frankly, I felt as though I had been drinking hard already. At this he smiled, and prescribed a glass of wine before anything else; and certainly, five minutes after following his advice, the headache had gone, and I was quite ready to join in the valorous attack which, after begging me to

excuse him, he was making single-handed upon the dishes. For the life of me I couldn't help laughing as he fell upon one dish after another. Cold beef, cold ham, cold partridges and a beefsteak-pie all suffered grievously, and he too laughed good-humouredly at my amazement, encouraging me to join.

'Nothing will happen,' he promised me. 'Don't suppose that your profession will profit one ha'penny by this. I've fasted, and now I'm feasting in a small way. I've watched, and presently I'll sleep some twelve hours or more, and the balance will be perfectly restored.'

At last, with a sigh of satisfaction, he laid down his knife and fork, and announced that he had finished.

'Here are two easy-chairs by the fire ; here are cigars and accy ; and there is boiling water. Shall it be grog, or will you have coffee first ?'

I refused coffee, and he agreed with me that grog would be the more reasonable. So he mixed a couple of glasses, we both lit up, and then he said he was ready to talk over things, and hoped that I would speak plainly, and ask any questions that were worrying me, and give him my own recollections of what had happened.

At this I hesitated, and giggled again, not knowing where to begin, and having Mrs. Reay-Carter's face always before me.

'Come !' he said at last. 'Let's get to the main point first. Did you, at the end, see any face you knew ?'

'Yes,' I told him, 'Mrs. Reay-Carter's !'

Maxwell-Farquharson gave a long whistle, and sat staring at me, as much surprised, if not as much amused, as I had been.

'No one else ?' he asked presently.

• 'I saw more than one face. Some I had never seen before, others suggested people I know ; but no one else was so plainly seen as Mrs. Reay-Carter.'

Over this he thought some time, with big pulls at his meerschaum, and sips of toddy, and at last he spoke :

'Have you seen Mrs. Reay-Carter just lately ?'

'I met her this afternoon—but I met half a dozen other people I knew, and spoke to two or three.'

He shrugged his shoulders, as if disclaiming all responsibility.

'Well, if she was much in your thoughts to-day, that,

might account for it. Besides, remember, she might be concerned in your danger without for a moment wishing you any harm. Another thing I may tell you, that many people who have studied these matters hold that there are often blinds, that is, false visions coming with the true, and drawing your attention off. If you deceive, these would say, then you in your turn shall be deceived.'

It seemed to me that, with the best possible intentions, I had been doing very little else but hide and deceive for some time ; but I let that pass.

'You tell me to speak plainly,' I said, 'and to ask questions. Frankly, now, couldn't all these things be put down simply to my imagination, helped by your cigarettes and incense?'

'Many people would explain it all in that way,' he said quietly, and not at all troubled at my growing unbelief. 'But I don't agree with them, or, as you may suppose, I should think twice about going through such elaborate preparations. My point, however, is clear and simple enough. The faces you saw in the last flash—for, believe me, it was scarcely more—were the faces of those with whom I recommend you to have no dealing for the next two or three days.'

'Am I to be afraid of my own friends and acquaintances?' I asked hotly.

'If a man has small-pox,' he answered, 'he's equally dangerous to you, isn't he, whether he's your enemy or your best friend. Besides, Hothead !' he went on, getting up as he spoke and holding out his hand, 'who said you were or should be afraid? I'm the nervous one, and you're going to do as I ask, simply to oblige me. Now, I shan't ask you to stay longer. I'm going to sleep as greedily as I ate.'

I rose too, and if I grew hot as I asked my last question, I couldn't help that.

'Tell me,' I said, 'did you see all that I did?' And Maxwell-Farquharson laughed out fairly and frankly.

'Ah ! Since you decide that it was all your imagination, how could I?' he asked slyly. 'But wait ! I forgot thought-transference. Do you believe in that? If so, it would account for everything you thought you saw, wouldn't it?—even for what some non-scientific people would have called the Elementals.'

After that he would say no more about it, merely begging me, for the sake of any friendly feeling I might have toward him, to do as he had asked ; and I went away with a recollec-

tion of him standing on the doorstep, and yawning the widest yawn that I had ever seen anywhere.

I went up the street, not knowing what to think of it all. If anyone else had told me any such story, I should most certainly have wondered whether I looked fool enough to believe it. At the thought of what I supposed might be called spells and incantations ending in—Mrs. Reay-Carter, I fairly shouted there in the road, and nearly got taken care of in consequence by a friendly policeman, who had some excuse for supposing that I couldn't take care of myself. And yet it was all very well to laugh; but what about Maxwell-Farquharson? He didn't seem to care in the very least about arguing the point, but he had taken a great deal of trouble, and put himself to great inconvenience, with no earthly advantage to himself.

Maxwell-Farquharson at the supper-table, wolfing a meal, after quite certainly a long fast, and Maxwell-Farquharson on the doorstep, after what had been quite as certainly a tiring time, rose before me again, and I had to confess that at least I ought to be grateful—and then a memory arose of that other figure, as it stood holding out its arms, while all others held back and waited, and it was on that my thoughts lingered until I had reached my room and my bed, for only a few hours of dreamless sleep before Clegg roused me, in the grey and early morning, to say that I must be quick if I wished to catch our train.

I was quick. Sleepy as I had been when I got back the night before, yet I had had sense enough to put my things for the next morning where I could easily find them, and knickerbockers, stockings and boots, Norfolk jacket, gun and cartridges, all lay ready to my hand as I jumped from my bed. The cold shock of my bath, into which I tumbled still half asleep, woke me up thoroughly, and by the time I had dressed and got down to the dining-room, I was very wide awake indeed. There Clegg, always a favourite with the women-folk, had got a sleepy but willing maid to make coffee ready for us, and after a cup of that we started for the station, knowing that we should get our breakfast over the Border.

We whirled down through the stillness of a perfect October morning while the mist still hung in the hollows, startling more than one covey of birds as our train rushed by, and now and then marking a hare as it cantered away leisurely from its form with long strides through the dewy stubble.

At our station we found George Turnbull with his 'Aye,



lads ! It's no' a bad mornin', while he kept a firm rein and a watchful eye on the chestnut, who objected both to early exercise and to trains, and showed her feeling by an occasional rise on to her hind legs.

'Quick, lads ! In with your traps. It's only her play, but there's no holdin' her.' And with this explanation George let her go, while we were yet climbing into the high dogcart, and we shot away along the quiet country roads, under the dew-dripping trees, with here a glimpse of the bonny Tweed, and there of the Eildon Hills, where Arthur and his knights sleep in full harness by their war-horses until the war-horn is sounded and they ride out again to fight and to conquer. We spun away between the hedges, while George, with both hands on the reins, and his feet braced well against the splashboard, told us—in the intervals of entreating the mare to be steady—of our prospects for the day—how a covey always lay here on the farm, and a hare's form was there, and how, for the last two nights he had watched a flock of wild duck come up to feed at the same spot in the barley stubble above the braes, and had left them for all three of us to watch for together in the evening.

'And you'll stay the night, lads, of course, and maybe we'll have a turn again before you go back to-morrow, if you're sure you can't stay longer. Eh ! I pity you folk in town such weather as this !' And we laughed and chaffed and made small bets with him on the day's shooting, and forgot our troubles, and never thought how near we were to death that October morning.

Then we neared the farm, and there was Mrs. Turnbull waiting for us in the doorway, all fresh and charming in her white blouse, ready to welcome us, with the youngsters at her side, and to make us eat huge breakfasts before doing anything more. And now, when I hear people speak of omens and portents, of warnings and of second-sight, I think of that merry breakfast-table and of the bright, sunny October morning, and wonder why no sign came to me, if such things are, to warn me against what was to happen before the sun rose again. But there was no sign, and after all, if trouble is to come, why, let it come without too much preface, that we may be happy while we may.

We were allowed to rise from the table at last, and stretched our legs and sunned ourselves in the porch, chatting to Mrs.

Turnbull and dividing our cartridges, while George attended to his letters ; and when Clegg was away for a moment I took the chance, and told her frankly that I should be glad if she could make him stay with her for a week, and this she promised to do. Then George came out whistling and cheery, the harvest being over, and having been, as even he acknowledged, 'fairish,' and we tramped away with the two spaniels curling and squirming about our feet, and the old retriever marching proudly at George's heel, with head and tail well up, while the groom and a couple of farm lads followed, to beat the ground up more thoroughly and to carry our spoils.

The sunshine lay on the bare stubble fields, which I had last seen covered with tall, waving, whispering barley, and it was caught by the dewdrops, which sparkled upon the dark green turnip-leaves until the field seemed sown with diamonds. The air was so still, with just a touch of frost, that the autumn-tinted leaves fell slowly and straight to the ground, while far off, one could hear the partridges calling in half a dozen places.

First we took the steep whin-clad braes, where the partridges lay sunning themselves in the sandy hollows, to rise with a startled whirr and loud calling as the spaniels interrupted their basking. Now and again a long-tailed cock pheasant rose, his plumage glittering in the sunshine, while rabbits by the dozen scuttled across the sheep-paths, and dived, with a flirt of their white tails, into the burrows with which the braes were honey-combed. A great hare tumbled up out of a grass tuft between my feet, and startled me so that I had emptied both barrels before he had gone twenty yards, with the result that he went away untouched to enjoy life a little longer, while the old retriever made me blush to think that she had seen such a blunder.

By lunch-time we had finished the braes and the stubble, and our beaters were so well laden that two of them were sent off to the house with their burdens. Then we sat in the little spinney among the dry, odorous pine needles, and ate our lunch, while Clegg and I drank George's health for giving us such sport, and told of the wonderful shots we had made, and said very little of our yet more wonderful misses, until the boys had come back from the house and had eaten their lunch and drunk each his bottle of harvest beer, lying full length and shrugging their shoulders, stiff with the weight of the heavy game-bags.

Then George, who had been compassionate on account of

our poor legs, weakened by the town life which inwardly he so much despised, stirred us up again, and we stretched and shook ourselves, and declaring that we were as fresh as ever, made for the turnip-fields.

## CHAPTER LII

### A MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE

WE moved quietly in line through the tall 'shaws,' while the spaniels feathered away before and between us, and the birds rose around us, until the loads of the beaters began to grow heavy again, and my unaccustomed shoulder felt tender from the recoil of the gun. Then, just at the right time, when I, at any rate, began to wonder how much longer I could keep pace with George's long, tireless stride, he called a halt and suggested that, as we happened to be near the house and it was getting dusky, we should go in for a quick cup of tea, and then watch the barley stubble on the brae for an hour before dinner, and add some duck to our bag.

This we agreed to, and one of the boys was sent on ahead to say that we were coming, so that when we reached the house we found Mrs. Turnbull sitting at the little tea-table, ready to help us and send us off again. So we sat there and told her how good the lunch had been and how good the tea was, and what appetites we should bring in for dinner a couple of hours later, and wondered why anyone ever lived in town, and whether there would be room for another couple of young medical men anywhere thereabouts. This, at least, was what I thought at the time, believing everyone to be as jolly as I was. For although in town, with my books and indoor life, I am nervous and irritable, in the country I become at once happier, and I trust, a more companionable fellow, and for the moment, if I thought at all, I thought that Clegg too was throwing off his troubles as I was. Of Maxwell-Farquharson's warning I didn't even think any longer, being too much occupied in trying to politely prove to George that two birds which rose so equally between us that we both fired right and left at them *must* have fallen to my gun, because—I forget my reason now, but it seemed perfect at the time.

It was not until afterwards that I thought, and found it

impossible to remember any word spoken by Clegg while we drank our tea. Mrs. Turnbull told me, months later, that she had tried to make him talk, but had failed, for he scarcely looked at her, and only answered with a word or two, sitting there in the dusk, seeming to look about the room all the time.

Presently George put down his cup with a clatter, and told us, if we meant to get any duck at all, we must come out at once, to be in our places before they came over. So we finished our tea and came away into the chill evening air, and made for the braes, with the grave old retriever at our heels.

The year was dying, and now, in the dusk, one felt it. Through the day, in spite of bare fields and falling leaves, the bright sunshine and hard exercise warmed my blood, and made me forget that winter was drawing near. But now the sun had gone down, the moon was rising, and a little wind swept over the fields and chilled me as it passed. The birds of the scattered coveys were calling to one another, trying to meet again under the safeguard of night, and their note seemed to me a mournful protest against the dominion and the cruelty of man, who claims for himself the highest place in nature. A whaup, the chief scout and sentinel among birds, knowing us from afar, rose with his melancholy call, warning all his brothers that death was near, and the wind, whispering by, told the same story. I wondered why we had left the pleasant fire-side and the bright cosy drawing-room. Surely we had done enough killing for the day ! But I went on, of course, all the same, as did the other two ; but for some reason or another we said very little, and I do not believe it was merely the fear of disturbing the duck that kept us so quiet.

When we reached the place where the braes sloped down to the river, George posted us some twenty yards apart, Clegg on my left, while he himself went away to my right. Clegg stood in the shadow of a thorn-bush ; I could only mark him when now and then he moved a little beyond the shadow, or when the moonlight shone upon his gun-barrels. I sat on a tree-stump, just below the top of the brae, looking down on to the water, and who can wonder if, while watching the long, shadowy reach through which so ghastly a voyager had floated to me three months before, I presently began to think more of that and other such matters than of the ducks we had come out to watch for ? Recent rains among the hills had swollen Tweed's waters, and they swirled swiftly between her banks.

Later, if the rains lasted much longer up stream, those banks would not keep her from spreading out on to the low ground. I watched, as here and there an eddy caught the moon's rays, and wondered whether to-night any such careless traveller as I had once met there was being rolled down to the sea.

I may have sat a quarter of an hour, with thoughts of this kind wandering through my head, when I heard the faint whistling sound that we waited for. One hears or sees often very little of the duck, when watching like this, until there comes the whistling of their flight as they pass in a string overhead and then circle once or twice, lower and lower each time, if they intend to settle and feed on the ungleaned grain beneath them.

Looking up, I saw a flock of about fifteen cross the moon, and in a moment slit by like shadows and pass out of sight ; but the sound was repeated as they circled and passed again, nearer this time, and I got ready to fire when they should come once more. On they came, and I fired both barrels, bringing down two and scattering them to right and left. Then the sound of George's gun rang out, and the retriever, moving steadily across from the shadow, brought in three ; but there had been no sound from Clegg's side, although duck, I knew, must have passed right over him. Then feeling some vague uneasiness, I went over to his corner, but I could see nothing of him. There lay his game-bag on the ground, and there was his gun leaning against the tree—but Clegg had gone.

I stood staring about me, wondering what had happened. George was still in his place, and I could hear no sound except an occasional murmur from the rising Tweed, the soft whisper of the wind as it swept over the brae-side, and the creaking made by the branches of the thorn as they rubbed gently one against the other.

I called, at first in a low voice, then each time louder, until, although I got no answer from Clegg, George heard me and came to know what was the matter.

'Some humbug of Clegg's,' I told him. 'He's hiding somewhere and won't answer me. I can't help being a bit nervous, because he's not been quite himself lately. Of course it's only some silly joke, though.'

He looked out along the brae-side, bare and flooded with the moonlight, and then turned without a word and went down to the water. I followed, with the dread of misfortune grow-

ing every moment, and we stood looking over the dark, smoothly-flowing river, but saw no trace of anything unusual.

'Can the dog help us?' I asked.

'We'll try her,' George said doubtfully; and we turned up the slope again to the place where Clegg had been standing. Then George took up Clegg's gun, and calling up the retriever, made her smell at it, and told her to seek.

The wise old dog looked puzzled at first, but getting the order again, circled round the bush with her nose to the ground, and at last, seeming to pick up the scent, made off along the line of the thin, irregular hedge that, with a wire fence, bounded the barley-field.

We picked up the gun and bag, and followed at a trot, unable to keep level with her, but able to see her clearly as she pushed steadily on almost in a straight line.

It was getting too serious a matter for us to waste time in talking, and, except that George muttered some remark to himself now and then, we were both silent, keeping our eyes fixed on the dog in front of us.

She led us over field after field, here rousing a hare or a covey, there scattering a flock of sheep, but stopping for nothing until at last we found her at fault on the dusty road. Here she worked up and down, but could not pick up the scent again, and George pointed out the marks on the road by which he knew that a flock of sheep had passed within the last few minutes, on their way to the market.

'Let's go back by the road to the house,' he said. 'He may have gone that way after all. Anyway, we must see,' and we turned down at once, making a sort of pretence at being hopeful, but not in the least able to deceive one another.

Directly we opened the door Mrs. Turnbull came out to meet us.

'You dreadful men! You'll be late for dinner. Hurry up and change!' But as the light fell on our faces, she must have seen that something was wrong.

'Where's Mr. Clegg?' she asked at once, and stood looking with scared eyes from one to the other.

There was no time to lose in beating about the bush.

'We hoped he might be here,' I told her, but she shook her head at once, and I turned to George.

'When is there a train up?'

George looked at his watch.

'In half an hour ; but you can't catch it, even with the dogcart. The next one is in three hours. What do you want to do?'

'I must get back as quickly as I can go,' I said. 'I'm afraid he's gone that way. Are you sure—are you absolutely sure—we can't catch that train?'

But George shook his head decidedly.

'He will,' he said. 'He's perhaps had three-quarters of an hour's start already ; but we can't.'

'Will you give orders for the trap, then, and drive me to the station for the next?' I begged him, and he went off without any further argument.

While this was going on Mrs. Turnbull stood, looking very much as if she would like to cry, but she kept herself quiet and only spoke when George went away.

'What shall we do?'

'Have dinner in,' I told her. 'We don't go for nearly two hours. There's nothing else to be done here, and besides I may be making a great deal too much of this. \* Anyway, I'm quite sure it's no use looking about the farm for him.'

I believe that Mrs. Turnbull looked upon it as absolutely heartless to talk about dinner as things were ; but I insisted, and at last told her that if I didn't get dinner now, I couldn't tell when I should have that or anything else to eat, at which she blamed herself for not thinking of it, and gave her orders, while I went out to see George in the stables.

He had told the groom, and was coming back, with his head down and his hands in his pockets, when I met him.

'What does all this mean?' he asked me, turning out on to the road and looking anxiously up and down, as if he thought Clegg might yet come wandering along.

'It means that I'm a careless fool,' I said bitterly. 'I hope I may be the only one to suffer for it—that's all.'

'What have you got to do with it?'

'Some such thing as this has been threatening for the last two or three months, off and on,' I said. 'I was ass enough to keep it dark, and this is the result.'

We walked up and down just outside the gate, until they came out to say that dinner was ready.

I went in, mad with myself, and sick at heart, but determined to eat. Who knew what work lay before me, or when I should have the time to spare for feeding again? So I sat down and

ate obstinately, choking down the food, and doing a great deal better than either of the other two did, in spite of the load upon my conscience, and the sickening dread of what might have happened to Clegg.

Then, when the dreary dinner was ended, I suggested to George that, after all, it might be as well to get away at once. Very possibly we should get news of Clegg at the station, and then he would feel that the rest must be left to me, and could come back and report to Mrs Turnbull. They agreed to this, and soon I stood in the porch saying good-bye to Mrs Turnbull as cheerfully as I could, but feeling very queer as I saw them putting Clegg's things into the dogcart, together with some game.

Then George took the reins, the groom stepped back from the fidgetty mare's head, and we went off into the darkness, leaving Mrs. Turnbull at the door, where she stood and watched as long as we could see her.

The mare settled down to her work at once, and stepped out into a long, slashing trot that made the dusty highroad spin under us, and George, knowing the road as well by night as by day, and hoping for news at the station, never spared her.

Hedges slipped past us as we went, by wide road and quiet narrow lane, up hill and down hill, with very little difference in our steady pace. Indeed, as we whirled along, the mare seemed to share our excitement, and went as only a well-bred, well-fed mare can go, until at last she pulled up before the little country station, and stood with the light from the booking-office window thrown upon her heaving, steaming flanks.

We met the station-master at once, and he readily stopped when George spoke to him, but he could give us no news of anyone like Clegg. Then he called up the two porters, and one of them was able to tell us what I had expected.

He had seen Clegg come down the steps and get into the nearest compartment, just as the train was moving.

'A didna' fash himsel', the boy said.

He knew it was Clegg, because he had helped to carry our things up to the dogcart in the morning, and Clegg had given him a sixpence.

On being questioned further, he could not say that he had noticed anything peculiar. The train was moving out, he repeated, but Clegg took it coolly, and got in without any trouble.

We walked up and down the platform for a minute or two,



talking it over, but there was nothing to be done there. I had thought for a moment of coming up earlier and wiring to have Clegg watched at the other end, but even now I don't much blame myself for not having done that. It was only the end of it all that afterwards made one feel as if this would have been the right thing to do, and it is easy to find fault when it is too late.

I held out my hand to George, and, wishing him good-night, insisted on his waiting no longer.

He tried to protest, but I reminded him that the mare would very likely catch cold, that Mrs. Turnbull would be longing for news, and that, except to make it a little less wearisome for me, he could do nothing by staying for the train. So at last he gave way and went off up the steps, coming back to make me promise a telegram early the next day, and then I, beginning to feel lonely already, went up with him and watched the lights of the dogcart until they went out of sight.

Then I had a dreary half-hour on that platform, pacing restlessly up and down, and feeling as though it would be easier and quicker to walk all the way, until at last the train rolled up, and I settled into a corner, and knew that the end of my suspense drew near.

It was an express, and the mad way in which it raced screaming through station and tunnel suited my mood. In another hour, I told myself, I should be done with all this. Whatever might have been the cause of Clegg's mysterious journey, I could stand this strain no longer. It was good neither for him nor for me, and I would, with or without his permission, talk to Richie again. Mile after mile dropped behind us as we flashed through the sleeping country, until at last the houses grew more frequent, the lights of the city showed themselves, and we had reached Edinburgh.

Before the train had stopped I was out upon the platform, and catching a porter, showed him my things in the carriage, told him how to find those in the guard's van, and left him to send them all up. I could wait for nothing. I knew that I should reach the Rookery faster than a cab would, and the fever of fear had seized me again, driving me on, hot and cold by turns.

The everyday look of the station comforted me a little. It seemed so unlikely that anything particular could happen anywhere near this busy routine, and the further I went the more

commonplace and cheering everything seemed to be, until at last I stopped, panting for breath, within sight of our windows.

Blinds were down here, and curtains drawn there, but the lights shone through, steady and cheerful. I could even see that one man had put up his window and leant upon the sill, quietly smoking, and I laughed out aloud in my relief.

Then suddenly I caught my breath hard and tore along the street, frightened beyond all telling—by two shadows.

## CHAPTER LIII

### SHADOWS

ONLY shadows, I grant you, that sent me flying along, but they were shadows of falling figures, staggering between the light and the window with uplifted hands, and the window on which the shadow was thrown was a window of Reid's old room. I dashed to the door and rang a continuous peal with one hand, while I felt for my latchkey with the other, and so vehemently did I ring that, before I had fitted the key to the latch, the door was opened by one of our own men who happened to be standing in the lobby.

'Good heavens, Tree! What ails the man?' he asked, but I swung past him and up the stair at my swiftest.

'Quick!' I shouted. 'Follow!' And Bain—for it was he—followed at my heels.

Never before had those stairs seemed so many and so steep, though I took them two at a time; but in a few seconds I was flying along the corridor to Reid's room, and threw the door open—only to find that I was too late!

On the floor, gripping at one another still, and still darkly frowning, lay two figures—Clegg, quiet and insensible, but breathing yet, and Muir, already dead!

I threw myself down beside them, and losing all hope of Muir directly I had examined him, I turned all my attention to Clegg.

'Quick, Bain! Off to the City Police-station as hard as you can go, and bring Inspector Macintosh and the police surgeon, if he's there. Don't tell another soul going or coming!'

He wasted no words in answering, but turned and went, with one horrified glance at the floor and what lay there, and I was left alone with the dying and the dead—for, if I knew anything of fatal injuries and the signs of death, Clegg's was as certain as if he had died already.

He lay on the floor, breathing slowly and rather loudly, and after loosening his clothes and putting a pillow under his head, I decided to let him lie for the time with blankets over him, until I knew whether Macintosh would come at once, and the police surgeon with him, since they would prefer to see everything as I had found it, and I believed Clegg to be lying as easily there as he would anywhere in his present state. There was no outside wound to dress, no visible bleeding to stop, but an indented mark on the forehead showed where a blow had fallen, leaving the bone broken and sunk, and I felt that it must be moved before one could expect any change. Then, having a moment to think, I decided that I was too inexperienced to take this matter into my own hands altogether while so many practised surgeons were within reach; and scribbling a note there by Clegg's side, I went to the stair, and calling a servant girl, told her to get a messenger and send the note at once to the address written upon it.

Then I went back, and finding no change in Clegg, I turned again to the body that lay near. There the cause of death seemed plain. Finger-marks, many and easy to see, were thick about the throat, where Clegg was clutching him when I first saw them, and so great had the force been that I felt the cartilages were crushed under the skin. The face was grim and passionate yet, and I decided that probably he and Clegg, after some angry words, had closed upon one another, and that, with Clegg's fierce fingers upon his throat, Muir had spent his strength in one last desperate blow before they fell together.

I knelt, staring at him and thinking strange things, until I heard the sound of men's feet upon the stair. Then I lifted his head, and pulling aside the collar quickly from his neck, saw the cruciform mark there, and let the head fall back again before Bain came in with Inspector Macintosh.

The Inspector nodded gravely to me, and then looked about the room before closely examining the two shapes upon the floor.

'The same room!' He lifted his eyebrows as he said this,

pointing to the unfilled hole at the corner of the bookshelves, and then said no more until he had knelt and looked at Muir.

When he saw and recognised the frowning face, even he was startled into a low exclamation. Bain, not knowing of the visit he had made after Reid's death, had not thought of telling him the names of those he was to see, and when, turning quickly from Muir, he saw that Clegg's was the other face, he was for an instant shocked out of all professional silence. He started a quick sentence, 'Both of them! Why!' and then breaking off sharply, he walked to one of the windows, and pulling up the blind, stood with his back to us, staring silently out over the moonlit city. He only stayed there a few seconds, during which time there was no sound to be heard except that of the distant street noises and Clegg's slow breathing, and then he came back.

'Well, well, Doctor, one poor fellow is gone, anyway. What of this one?'

I shook my head.

'He's alive, as you hear,' I told him, 'I can say no more. You didn't bring Dr. Somerville?'

'He's the other side of the town,' Macintosh replied, looking soberly down upon Clegg's upturned face. 'You want other help, of course?'

'Of course,' I said, 'but I sent a note out just now. Perhaps this is the answer. Go to the door, Bain, and let no one in unless it's Lawrie.'

It was Lawrie, the surgeon (my old teacher) to whom I had written, and who came in, shown to the door by a wondering servant, as ready and clear-headed as if he had not been dragged out just when he thought he had finished his day's work.

'How are you, Tregenna? Lucky you sent when you did. I was just off to my bed. Ah! Inspector, what does this mean?'

I stood aside and he knelt down.

'Clegg, the poor boy! Who did this?' And he looked across him at the body lying beyond.

'He's dead,' I told him. 'It's Muir, Reay-Carter's laboratory assistant, you know.'

'Good Heavens! What were they doing?'

Lawrie's startled eyes looked into mine, but turned without waiting an answer, and fell keenly on to Clegg's again,

while his quick fingers went deftly and delicately over the forehead, lingering about the ugly inequality that showed there.

He looked up at me at last, with his finger upon the mark, and shrugged his shoulders.

'We must get him to bed first. You've seen all you need to, Macintosh?'

The Inspector had been making a memorandum or two while looking about him, and now, with a last glance round, nodded and closed his notebook.

'All right, sir. You'll take him to the Infirmary, of course?'

Lawrie looked at me through his spectacles, and said he thought so, but I protested.

'You'll operate, I suppose,' I said to him, 'but you can do that quite well here, can't you? He shall be carried to my room, only a few steps off. You shall have as much help as you want, and I'll nurse him myself. Surely the less he's moved the better.'

'If you can manage for him to be quiet,' Lawrie said, and I promised that and everything else needed, deciding that another empty room I knew of might be even better than my own.

But Macintosh was not quite so willing.

'The Infirmary 'd be the best for us, gentlemen, if it could be done.'

'What have you got to do with it?' I asked him angrily; but he pointed to Muir's body by way of answer.

'We can take that away,' he said significantly, 'but one of my men must be wherever the other one is for the time.'

His meaning was so plain that I said nothing more than that his man should be arranged for, and when Lawrie, seeing my anxiety, agreed that he thought it would be safer than moving Clegg, the Inspector had to give way.

Lawrie stayed there while I went off to order the bed to be made, and Macintosh left, promising to make the necessary arrangements for quietly taking away the other inmate of the room.

Presently everything was ready, and we carried Clegg slowly and carefully away to a quieter part of the house, after which Lawrie examined him again and decided not to operate until the morning, after another man had given an opinion, unless I should send before then to say that it seemed necessary.

He stood looking down upon the bed sadly enough before going away.

'With a brain injury like that one can never be sure of anything,' he said. 'One doesn't even know whether to wish him through it or not.' And as he nodded grimly toward the next room, where one could hear one of Macintosh's men preparing for the night, I felt bitterly that I agreed.

'At the best it's bad enough,' I told him. 'I may as well say at once that I blame myself, and don't think Clegg knew what he was about.'

'There, there,' Lawrie interrupted me hastily, 'don't go saying too much until you're questioned. You've got time to think over what you have to tell them.' Which was quite true, for all I had told Macintosh was that I had seen two struggling shadows on the blinds, as I came back after being away all day, and had found Muir and Clegg pretty much as he saw them.

I was too busy to talk about what had happened earlier in the evening, and he, of course, couldn't interrupt me much while I had Clegg on my hands, so the whole thing was left pretty well to stand over until the morning.

Lawrie shook hands at last, and went away, wishing me as good a night as I could expect, but it was really already between one and two in the morning.

Other men had offered help, but I had refused them. It was nothing for me to do, I said, feeling in the bitterness of my heart that at least if Clegg awoke he must find me, and no one else, beside him, and wondering also in a vague way whether any part of that seemingly senseless body knew and was comforted by my companionship.

It was not until everyone had left me, and the house lay still and sleeping, that I began really to feel what had happened. From the moment I had that first warning, as I looked at our windows, until now, I had been too busy to feel or even to think; but now, with some lonely hours before me, I gradually began to see things as they really had been, and sitting there, dry-eyed but despairing, I cursed myself and my careless sluggishness that had made such a tragedy possible. Then I suppose that I got a bit light-headed, for the room seemed to fill with mocking shadows that pointed at the bed and jeered at me, and among them came and went the sphinx face, telling me—though I heard no sound—that I was a fool and a false

friend, and that it were better for me and for the world if I lay where he did.

So the night passed by, and the grey dawn crept in, while I sat, or thought, I sat, watching by my dearest friend, and fighting evil thoughts and unclean spirits, though Heaven only knows whether, after all, I may not have been false again, and merely dreaming by the bedside.

Soon after daylight the detective left there by Macintosh put his head in at the door, and nodding in a half-friendly, half-apologetic way, asked in a whisper if he might come in ; but he only looked at the bed from a distance, and went away without any encouragement from me to stay. I was so haunted by the possibility that Clegg might know more than we had any reason to suppose, of what was going on around him.

Later, Lawrie came with another surgeon, and after careful consultation, he operated, relieving the pressure of the depressed bone upon the brain, but shaking his head over what was to be seen there ; and, indeed, from that time I lost hope for anything more than, at any rate, a short time of consciousness and speech before the end.

So the day dragged on, with now and then a visit from the quiet detective, and now and then from Lawrie, but no one else came into the room. I took my meals there, and in Lawrie's absence did what little could be done for Clegg myself.

It was not until sundown that I could believe I saw any change. Then, faintly and far off, came the sound of drums and pipes upon the still evening air from the Castle esplanade, and I thought as they began, that a movement, as it were a shadow, passed over the face. The window was open a little at the top, and fearing lest the noise troubled him, I moved to close it ; but as I did so, his eyelids fluttered and parted, he made a little sign to me with one slowly-moving hand, and I knelt down breathless and dizzy beside the bed.

At first I was afraid even to whisper, and knelt there trembling, while his weak fingers closed about mine, until he spoke :

‘What's up, Tree?’

‘I couldn't speak at first ; I could scarcely see ; and presently he asked the question again in an unsteady whisper.

‘You've had a nasty knock.’

I spoke as unconcernedly as I could, but it was no use.

'What are you crying for?' was the next question; and if I was making a fool of myself, whose business is that?

I told him to go to sleep, and he lay with his eyes closed a little, and I knew he was listening to the drums and the pipes.

'Jolly, ain't they?' he whispered, and as they drew nearer, while, as I knew, they were striding down the esplanade with the streamers of the pipes fluttering behind, and the bare-legged little lassies of the Lawnmarket skipping before them, the sound stirred his blood and he spoke again.

'I'll thrash him as soon as I can move,' he declared in a loud whisper, and I, knowing what he must mean, shrank back where he could not see my face—though his hand still gripped mine—and thought of the still shrouded figure that had been carried out of our doors.

'What was it all about?' I asked him a moment later. But he only babbled, in broken, whispered words, of the shooting which to me seemed so long ago, and I was afraid to rouse him with a loud voice for fear of the man still in the next room.

The deep, thrilling thud of the drums died away in the distance, and he lay still a while; then spoke again, so weakly that I had to bend my head low beside him.

'Tree! Tell Muir I bear no malice. We were both off our heads. Tell him, will you?'

'I will,' I said, and will answer for it when the day comes.

Then he laughed softly, and I found that what he was muttering over and over again was the last verse of the old Border ballad, 'Johnnie Faa':—

And we were fifteen well-made men,  
Of courage stout and steady,  
And we were a' put down but one  
For a fair and winsome lady.

Even then my silly ear told me that he altered two words, but I cursed both it and my cold-blooded pedantry, and waited for more.

Presently he whispered again:

'Tree, maybe I ought to tell you. I'm pretty weak.'

'I know,' I said. 'But cheer up, old man, and get better quickly, if you love me. Is that what you want to say?'

I listened until I could hear my own watch ticking in my pocket before he answered.



'Maybe I've been a cur,' he said. 'It's best to speak out.' And then some awful seconds went by before he spoke again. 'Tell you what a fool I've been. Work it out for me. Can't wait till I can do it. I may be here a day or two, mayn't I?'

He dosed again, while I heard nothing beside a sparrow chirping outside the window, and saw nothing as I turned my ear to his lips, except the waving of the portiere over the doorway, stirred by some passing draught.

'Go on,' I said softly. But for a while he only muttered that he must go, that he must keep tryst in spite of all the ducks in the world, and it was some time before he spoke clearly and sensibly again.

## CHAPTER LIV

### TO THE SOUND OF TATTOO

A LITTLE later he began muttering again.

'I must tell you. I can't think it out. You saw them all'

'All of whom?' I whispered; but he only moaned, lifting one hand to his head while he held my hand with the other.

I was afraid at the moment to call the detective, the only one within hearing, lest Clegg should be startled and refuse to speak before a stranger, so I waited.

Then he rambled on again about the post-mortem theatre, and Reid, and he clung to me, shivering, and begged me to stop that infernal fiddle.

At last he dropped off into another dose, and when he awoke and spoke again his manner was quite different, and his voice so clear that I thought the man in the next room must hear it.

'Tree, old man, I've got a lot to tell you.'

His eyes were steady as I leant over him, and he seemed quite calm.

'Are you strong enough to speak?' I asked him.

'Yes. I must be quick, Tree.'

'Someone else should be here besides me,' I said. 'May I send for Lawrie? He's an old friend, you know. You can trust him.'

He nodded slightly, as if waiting to keep his strength;

but when I moved to leave the room he would not let go my hand.

'Only for a moment,' I told him. 'I'll go down and send off a messenger and be back at once.'

'I'm a coward,' he whispered. 'Conscience makes cowards. Be quick !'

I hurried away along the quiet dark corridor, just stopping for a moment, as I passed the other room, to tell the man that I was going to send for Lawrie.

I gave a scribbled line to a servant, urging Lawrie to come at once, and was hurrying back up the stair when I was stopped by the housekeeper.

'Have you seen the lady, Dr. Tregenna ?'

'What lady ?' I asked. 'I can see no one just now.'

'Mrs. Reay-Carter, sir, I think the girl said it was. I told her to say you couldn't be disturbed. Here, Maggie !' she called to a passing servant, 'you told me about the lady for Dr. Tregenna ?'

'Mrs. Reay-Carter ! Yes, she's in your room, sir. She said she'd stay a few minutes, but not long, because of a friend waiting outside. She wants news of Mr. Clegg, sir.'

I ran up and threw my door open impatiently, but Mrs. Reay-Carter had got tired of waiting and had gone. I wasted no further time over that, but picking up a pen and paper, in case I should want to take anything down in writing presently, I moved away to join Clegg ; but, when I was near the door, a girl's shriek sent me back again on to the stair, and I ran down a couple of flats where one of the housemaids was sobbing hysterically by the open door of Reid's old room.

'Be quiet at once !' I said roughly. 'You disturb Mr. Clegg. What are you shouting about ?'

She whispered she had seen a ghost, and no ridicule made any difference in her belief. She was going in, she told me, to fetch a scuttle of coals that she knew stood by the fireplace, to save herself the trouble of filling an empty one from another room. As she opened the door the ghost came out and went by 'like a blast,' she said, pointing to the open door and the fallen empty scuttle to prove the words.

I spent no more time in talking to her. If it were indeed a ghost, it didn't much matter to me, and shutting and locking the door, I told the girl to fill her scuttle at the right place, and make no more noise unless in her own room.

On the stair I met Lawrie. He had been caught by my messenger when already on his way up, and he was as much excited as he would let himself be at any time.

'We don't want any of your detectives, Tregenna,' he whispered as we went. 'The poor fellow will very likely talk a lot of nonsense, to ease his mind, that an outsider might take as gospel. Muir's dead, anyway, and he's dying. We'll just see what the poor lad havers about first.'

So we passed into the room together and went to the 'bed, but Lawrie's precautions were not needed.' Clegg lay with his eyes open and fixed upon us, but he could move neither hand nor foot, nor would he 'haver' any more. Clegg was dumb. He lay with a look of intense horror upon his face, but nothing moved except his eyes, which rolled almost ceaselessly from us to the door and back again, vainly trying to tell us we knew not what, and by nothing that we might say or think of could we quiet those terrible roving eyes, or soften the expression of the tortured face.

Lawrie led me just outside the door at last, after gently promising Clegg that he would take me no further, and that he should never be left alone, and told me that he thought the end very near.

'He'll speak no more,' he said. 'Whatever he wanted to say, it will die with him so far as he is concerned. I believe we can do nothing more, except keep the poor fellow as quiet and easy as possible for a few hours longer.'

Then, after going back for a moment and pressing Clegg's hand where it lay outside the bed-clothes, he picked up his hat and went away, and I was left alone again, it being then about eight o'clock.

A little later, however, the door was pushed softly open, and Bain looked in quietly, and at last came over on tip-toe to the bed, where he stood looking sorrowfully down upon Clegg's white and bandaged face.

I had refused dinner, feeling it impossible to eat, and Bain had brought me up a cup of hot coffee. Clegg was in a dull sleep or stupor again now, but it was impossible to tell how far he was conscious of what went on around him, and I kept Bain from asking questions. He waited while I drank the coffee, and when he took away the cup, I went with him to the door, Clegg being still in a doze.

He got me outside and spoke softly :

'Will he pull through?'

I couldn't speak, but I shook my head and moved to go back.

'Have you heard how it happened, Tree?'

He spoke so meaningly that I turned to him again.

'What do you mean? Do you know any more than I do?'

'How can I tell?' he answered. 'You weren't here when Clegg came back.'

'When did he come?'

'A couple of hours or so before you did. I was down in the dining-room having a sort of dinner and supper together—for I'd been over the hills and missed dinner—when Clegg walked in. He didn't speak to me, but just sat down, drumming his fingers on the table, and staring straight in front of him as if he was waiting. Presently in comes the girl with some pudding, and seeing him there, thinks he's been out like me, I suppose, and brings in more meat. So he just sat and polished it off without saying anything, and then in came Muir. Bain stopped at the recollection, but I told him to be quick and finish.

'Well, he's dead now,' he went on, 'and one doesn't like to say things about him; but I tell you he was the very devil last night.'

'Go on, man,' I said. 'What do you mean?'

'I've seen him funk Clegg more than once,' Bain went on, shaking his head, 'but I tell you he went clean out of his way to make him mad last night.'

'What did he do?'

'What didn't he do, you mean! Talked to me about the way the place had been bossed by one man (of course he meant Clegg) and swore that there'd be no more of it. Clegg's been so touchy lately, you know, nobody knew what would happen unless he got his own way.'

'Go on,' I said.

'Well, Clegg must have heard him, but took no more notice than if he'd been the table. Seemed, somehow, to be listening to something else, and began to fidget. The less he noticed what Muir said, the wilder Muir got.'

He stopped again to think, but I was in a fever.

'For heaven's sake get on, can't you? He may wake any minute.'

'Well, at last Muir looked right over at him and laughed

straight out. "Every dog has his day," he told him, "and you've had yours, you cur." And would you believe it? instead of giving him a jolly good hiding, Clegg just at that instant pushed his chair back, and saying something about stopping an infernal fiddle from making such a row, walked straight out of the room. Then Muir just sat there, chuckling like a madman, a little while. "So he's a coward," he said presently, and sat thinking for a minute or two, and then went off.

'Why on earth didn't you do something?'

'I was hungry and jolly glad they'd gone. I never thought at first that Muir was after Clegg, but I got a bit scared later, and was just going up the stair when you rang.'

Was I not far more to blame than he was? I groaned out aloud; and then, remembering that even that might be heard, I went back and sat down again by the bed to wait for the end.

It could not be long in coming now. On his forehead the sweat stood out as often as I wiped it away, and the dry lips, which I moistened every few minutes, fell a little apart. I went to the window, and throwing it yet more widely open to freshen the room, I leant out and looked into the night. The sky was cloudless, the light from the nearly full moon streamed into the room, and falling across the bed seemed to pierce Clegg's stupor and rouse his brain. He stirred uneasily, muttering vague, meaningless words, and I brought forward a screen that shielded his face, and then went back to the window.

The sharp autumn touch of the night air quieted me a little. The clear, frosty sky and the withered leaves, which one by one were fluttering down past the window, the ghosts of their old selves, all silently helped to remind me that the end was the same for all, by whatever path it might be reached.

While I leant dreaming there, the clocks of the city struck half-past nine, some faintly and far off, and others clearly and near at hand. As the Castle clock sounded, the bugles rang out with it, and I knew that they went for the beginning of tattoo.

I looked toward the bed, and seeing that Clegg's eyes had opened, I raised my hands to pull down the sash, but let them fall again without having touched it. Tattoo had always been one of his great pleasures. He and I had often gone together to the esplanade to listen, and to watch the drummers and pipers come swinging down from the Castle, playing as they

came. We would hear them together to-night for the last time.

I went quietly back to the bed, and sitting down with my eyes on his eyes, took his hands in mine and waited, and I will swear that he knew what was coming and what I felt. Then presently through the open window rolled the rattle of the drum and the scream of the pipes to a marching tune, while I gripped his hands and looked into his eyes, and each knew what the other thought, though no word was spoken.

Back again they went, and we knew that the moon shone upon the waving tartans and the fluttering streamers, and was reflected from brooch and buckle as they tramped along. Then they stayed in the centre of the esplanade and played reels and strathspeys, while I held both his hands in mine, and shook to think that he would never dance more.

Thus passed nearly half an hour, while neither of us spoke or moved, and then the pipes changed the tune and began to moan out a lament. It wailed through the air and filled the place, and as it cried, the shadows thickened about the room, and the face on the bed grew grey.

The pipes died into silence, and there was a moment's pause, while the breath fluttered on his lips, and the hands that had been so weak tightened upon mine, so that I could make no movement without wrenching them away, and clenching my teeth, I sat still and waited.

Presently the bugles sang out again in the long, clear call of the 'Last Post,' and as the last mounting note was blown out over the city and echoed and died away, Clegg died too.

## CHAPTER LV.

### IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

I SAT there for some time looking at the dead face, and then, gently freeing my hands, I went into the next room.

The man was nodding by the fire over the evening paper, and I touched him on the shoulder before he heard me and rose.

'You can go,' I told him. 'There is nothing left for you to do.'

He understood in a moment, and following me into the room, bent over the body.

'Aye, aye,' he muttered. 'Poor laddie! I'll tell the Inspector, Doctor. If you've any message for him, I'll give it.'

'Tell him that he spoke a little, but lost speech again some hours ago without having made any statement. Mr. Lawrie saw him just after he had stopped speaking. Say that I can't see anyone to-night, but if Inspector Macintosh likes to call to-morrow, I'll tell him anything he wants to know about it. I'm not well enough to-night.'

The man looked at the open window, and muttered something about catching my death of cold, but went away, promising to tell the housekeeper as he passed down.

Then came people to wait upon the dead, and for a while I dragged off to my own room and sat shivering there alone; but at last, when what had to be done was done, I crept back to my post again, and sat there while the wind, which had veered round to the west, blew thick rain and driving leaves against the window, moaning about the house as if in requiem, until, in the wet, windy, grey dawn, someone came and led me away to my own bed.

There I lay tossing and dozing, muttering to myself in a voice that now and again roused me with a start, it was so unlike my own, and all the while my brain would give me no rest, but worked away, going over and over all that had happened in the last three months, constantly reminding me of little things that I did not even know I had noticed, until vague suspicions arose and would not be put aside, but grew clearer as the day dragged on, and with them a plan whereby they should be confirmed or destroyed.

Then I rose and wrote two letters—one to the Countess of Jura, saying that I was ill, and that since I thought I might see her no more, I was sorry that I had not been more patient when we last met. I was sure, I said, that I had been to blame, and I bade good-bye to them both. I wrote another letter too, and the next time someone came to the room, I made them promise that the two letters should be posted at once. Then I lay back and called up my strength and obstinacy for a last fight. In another twenty-four hours I might sleep, or I might die. I should not long be missed, I told myself, but there was work to be done first, and I pulled myself together for what might be coming.

Late in the afternoon they told me that Mrs. Reay-Carter had twice called, but that they had pretended I was asleep, and she had gone away. Later still a servant came again, and said that a gentleman wished to see me and would not be refused, saying that he must wait until I would let him come up.

'Who is he?' I asked, and the girl gave me Maxwell-Farquharson's card.

I laughed out aloud as I let it drop. What did I care though the shivering girl thought me mad?

'Tell him to come up, and let me be done with him!' I told her, and presently Maxwell-Farquharson walked in and, closing the door behind him, sat down by my bed.

I lay and looked at him sullenly, while he looked at me; and I ask him again now, as I asked him long since, to forgive me for my want of common gratitude and civility.

'I am ill,' I told him. 'What can I do for you?'

'Nothing,' he answered quietly, taking no notice of my manner. 'To-night will be full moon. I came to remind you of it, that is all.'

'What is that to me?' I asked him, writhing in my bed. 'Don't you know what happened last night?'

'Let the dead be!' he answered solemnly. 'My business is with you. Your danger has yet to come.'

'Let it come!' I told him. 'If you had warned him instead of me, I would have thanked you. I will face it out.'

Then Maxwell-Farquharson rose from his chair and held out his hand.

'If I knew how to help you further, I would,' he said simply, 'as I would have helped Clegg if I had known. Can I do nothing for you?'

But I shook my head, and buried my face in the pillow, and cried out that I had been a false friend and a murderer, and that what had to be done I would do alone. It was the least I could do, I cried, and if I failed, what did anything matter? And Maxwell-Farquharson, wringing my hand, went quietly away and left me alone in the shadowy room.

When the housekeeper came to ask me about dinner I would have none, but ordered tea, strong tea, and laughed when she begged me not to take any, but to sleep or I should be ill. I had work to do, I said, and I would not sleep until it was done, and she went away shaking her head at my madness.



It was late in the afternoon now, the shadows were lengthening, and my room was already growing dark. Outside, the rain still drove against the windows as it had done all day, and the wind moaned in my ears as it had moaned, I thought, for ages.

When the servant brought up my tea in a little cup I raved at her, and sent down for more, and drank it until every nerve in my body twitched and ached.

Then I told her to find pencil and paper, and writing a name, made her read it, and gave orders that no one but that one person could see me for the evening, but that the one was to be brought up, however late it might be.

After that I lay still and thought over my past life, its sins and its follies, and hoped for forgiveness. I thought of my friends who were living, and wondered if I should be missed, and I thought of the one who was dead, and wondered whether I was to join him that night. Then I straightened myself out and lay quiet, and tried to put away all evil thoughts and all recollection of what lay behind in the old past life, and waited steadily for what was to come, while the full moon rose and flooded the room with her ghostly light.

## CHAPTER LVI

### DE MORTUIS

I LAY for a long while staring at the dancing shadows on the wall, as the fire flickered in the grate, for there was no other light in the room, and I heard no sound but that of my own heart thumping and the blood singing in my ears. But the tea worked upon my weakened nerves, until I could lie there and wait no longer. I got up, and slipping into flannels, paced up and down the room.

My letter, I began to think, was useless. Why had I not sent it by some messenger straight on its errand, instead of letting it be tossed among scores and hundreds of idiotic, unimportant scribbles at the post-office? I cursed myself as an everlasting fool, and was near going out to follow my letter, when a footstep sounded in the corridor. At most, I thought, it would be a servant coming to ask whether I would see any-

one so late, but I slipped into bed, dressed as I was, and lay waiting once more.

There was a tap at the door, not like the servants' knock, and I drew a long breath before I answered. Then in came a grey-cloaked figure, tall and mysterious in the firelight, and I shuddered where I lay, knowing that Death was very near, as the figure knelt beside my bed.

'You are ill?'

'I have been very ill all day,' I answered, 'and I am sick of everything.'

'Even of life?'

'Life means very little to me,' I answered, groaning as I thought of what I had lost. 'Mine has been a failure.'

The figure leant forward closer yet, until I could feel its breath upon my face.

'But are you ready to die?'

'Yes, if need be,' I muttered through my set teeth, for now surely I was in the Valley of the Shadow, and it chilled me to the bone.

Then a hand began to stroke my forehead and my face, while I lay with tense muscles to avoid shrinking under that touch, until presently I grew drowsy with the mere monotony of it, and lay staring up into the half-hid face and great grey eyes that hung over me, while my limbs relaxed and lay heavy upon the bed under their spell.

If, as I thought, this was death, was it so bitter after all? Was life, with its fret and its struggle after nothing, so well worth keeping?

My eyelids grew heavy and drooped over my staring eyes, under the soft, monotonous stroke of the hand, on which, every now and again, some gem flashed in a ring as the firelight touched it.

Whether I really heard a voice, or whether I dreamt, I cannot tell, but now it seemed to me that a voice sounded, as monotonous as the constant passes over my drowsy eyes.

'Poor fool! You were near this days ago, and you let a woman drag you from it!'

I sleepily tried to understand, but it was easier to lie and listen while the voice went smoothly on, and I thought in my dreaminess that I knew now what the Sirens had been.

'Poor fool! Is life so sweet?' it muttered in my ear, and I sighed and answered back like an echo, 'Is life so sweet?'

'Life is a bitter thing,' it muttered on, firm and insistent. 'The body is a soiled covering. Put it aside ! You have tired of life and its sins and follies, and the end of it is near,' and at this I felt as a weary man might feel who was told that his bed waited for him, while all the time the voice in my ear was gathering strength and certainty and firmness, and now spoke like the voice of fate :

'I am the Angel of Death ! I gather the fruit that is ripe before it can decay. I set my seal upon you, which your soul shall never remember and your body shall never forget. It is fire, and it burns you and marks you for ever. When I will, you shall be dumb, as others were dumb before you, and when I will, you shall die, and rest as your friend rests,' and as the shape spoke, it seemed to dilate before my eyes, closed though they were, until it looked the Angel of Death itself.

Then a hand moved my head aside, and another hand touched my neck, and I felt my flesh rise and blister under it. But at the word 'friend,' I thought of Clegg, and my will stirred and fought as a man might who has been dragged down into the deep sea, and turning his face upward, struggles to reach the day once more. As it threw off the fetters of sleep, I thought of Clegg again, and tried to speak. My face quivered, while every muscle on it worked and knotted in vain, and my lips writhed impotently, until at last the load slipped off, my limbs were free, and I stammered and cried aloud through the night :

'Not yet, murderess ! Not yet, I swear !'

I sprang at her and clutched the cloak, but it loosed and fell on me, while I tripped and rolled in the coverlet, and the figure slipped like a shadow from the room.

I staggered up again, and ran shouting along the corridor, but the household was asleep, and when I listened as I ran, the only sound I could hear was that of flying feet far down the stair. On I went, and sprang through the open door as the noise of startled sleepers rose above me. Out into the wind and the rain, chasing the shadow that flew before me like a leaf, now seeing it an instant, now losing sight of it altogether, but always chasing, chasing, and muttering Clegg's name as I ran. On the road below the Castle Rock, a soldier leant forward against the wind, peering into the darkness, and as I raced past, he gave a shout and followed me.

On and on, through the whistling, howling night, and the

stinging rain. Was it only the wind that shrieked before me? There was a cry, and I flew by a struggling, swaying mass, but never dreamt of stopping. The shadow was still before me, and nearer now, and I raced on, feeling as though my heart would burst.

A moment later a great beast galloped by, growling as it went, and the light of a street lamp fell upon a mastiff with bloodstained jaws.

Where were we flying, and when would this mad chase finish? We had crossed the west end of Princes Street, and still I gained, inch by inch, though the throbbing of my brain and the ringing in my ears grew to a low, unceasing roar.

Then suddenly I knew that we had reached the Dean Bridge, and the roar was that of the swollen water, rushing in flood far below.

The figure swerved, while the mastiff shot ahead, but as I stretched out my hand, my bare feet slipped on the wet pavement, and I rolled over. I clutched the air; there was a flutter on the low parapet, and then no sound but that of the wind as it moaned by, sweeping over the water hundreds of feet beneath.

As I struggled up, the dog turned, and rose with its great paws upon the parapet, peering down; then raised its great head to the dark sky, gave one long, mournful howl, and plunged.

I leant against the parapet, sick and giddy, and looked over. Far beneath, running by the stream, is a low wall between the water and the footpath, with a lamp above it. Doubled across the wall lay a shape that, even as I stared, glided slowly off into the water, where by the flickering lamp-light, I saw the dog fight forward and snap at it.

'What is it? What have ye done?'

A voice shouted fiercely in my ear; I was caught roughly by the shoulder, and turning, I faced the constable I had talked with there weeks ago.

'I have killed a woman!' I said—and I remember no more

Four days after this I crawled slowly and painfully down from my room, and getting into the cab that was waiting for me, told the man to drive along the front of the Infirmary to the farthest gate.

I leant back, feeling very weak and miserable, nor did I

notice anything until the cab pulled up with a jerk in the middle of the street, and Maxwell-Farquharson looked in at the window and held out his hand.

'Perhaps I ought not to have stopped you,' he said, 'but I wanted to shake hands.'

'I'm very glad,' I told him hurriedly. 'I've been very queer, or I should have written to thank you and ask you to forgive——' but he stopped me gently at once.

'None of that, unless you want to hurt me. Where are you going?'

'On a miserable errand,' I told him. 'I'm asked to meet Howell at the Infirmary.'

'You're not fit to go alone,' Maxwell-Farquharson said, looking at me kindly with his keen eyes. 'Let me come too.'

'I don't know if they'll let you in. I don't know the regulations.'

'We'll chance that. I know Howell,' and he got in beside me, letting me lie back and say nothing until the cab stopped again.

Directly I stepped out, leaning heavily on his arm, for I was very weak, my troubles began. At the door to which we were moving stood Howell, talking gently and sorrowfully to a woman whose back was towards us. When he saw who was coming, he shook hands kindly with the woman, and she passed us by and went into the street. It was Meg, Miss Verney's old servant, upright and grim as ever, but I thought that she looked years older. She went past us hurriedly without seeing me, while I trembled and clung to Maxwell-Farquharson's arm, feeling that I was a murderer.

Howell stepped down to meet us, and led me into his little retiring room, where I lay on the couch for a few moments, while they talked in low tones to one another, until I sat up, declaring that I was better again.

Then Howell came and sat down by me.

'I didn't ask you to come for my own pleasure to-day, Tregenna,' he said quietly, 'but I didn't know how weak you would be. Shall we let the matter drop until you're well again?'

'No, no!' I said. 'Let us get it over and try to forget it.'

'Quite so!'—he nodded his head approvingly. 'I think if you can stand it, you will be better pleased after. Come, then, take my arm and we'll have done with it.'

We passed into a quiet side-room, and presently I stood looking down on the dead face of Miss Verney. It had not been mutilated in any way; the long dark hair hid the line of the incision which I knew ran across the top of the head, and the only mark was the old cicatrix, far back upon the temple, which I had noticed when I met her first.

Howell laid his finger gently upon this, and then pulled forward a chair.

‘Sit down, and I’ll show you something else.’

He crossed the room and came back with a section of a brain, deeply into which ran the scar of an old injury, while from the fibrous tissue of the scar sprang a small tumour.

‘This is what I wished you to see,’ he said. ‘This growth will be examined microscopically, but meanwhile this much is certain. It is the key to the whole tragedy of the last few months. But that is not all. I was afraid, from what I heard, that the unfortunate ending, and your share in it, pressed too much upon your mind, and that you could not throw it off in your present state.’

‘I murdered her,’ I said, gloomily.

‘Not at all,’ he persisted. ‘I would have done the same in your place if I had brains and pluck enough. You couldn’t tell the poor soul’s condition, neither could you tell how she would act at the last. More than that! This tumour, whatever its nature, was, I believe, still growing, and must in time, probably in a short time, have caused death.’ Meanwhile, the disorder, which probably started with the mildest symptoms of irritability and morbid imagination, was growing more violent, and she was certainly losing all caution. For example, from what I hear, she must have made her way to poor Clegg’s room that last evening.’ Either she made him dumb by suggestion, or she frightened him into cataplexy, but she was probably disturbed suddenly, and took fright, or she would have killed him at once. Think, my dear fellow, how many more lives might have been lost if she had not died.’

I sat trembling as I remembered them all.

‘Have you evidence that she acted with all as she did with me?’

Howell moved away again, and presently came back, and held up a beryl ring before me.

‘Do you know that ring?’

'It is hers,' I said. 'I tried to look at it more closely once.'

'Look at it now.'

I took it from him and examined it, leaning back wearily in the chair, while Maxwell-Farquharson stood beside me. The beryl stood out from its old-fashioned setting, and on its upper surface a cross was cut.

'It hurts me,' I said. 'It burns, and I feel the back of my neck burning while I hold it.'

At this Howell gave a startled exclamation, and turning away my collar, looked at the back of my neck.

'It was a near thing for you, Tregenna. I never knew it was so near as that. Look, Farquharson!' and I felt him tracing a cross on the back of my neck with his finger-nail.

'Don't be afraid, Tregenna,' he went on quickly. 'That can do nothing now, but you're the only one who has lived to show it, I think.'

'All done by suggestion!' murmured Maxwell-Farquharson at my back. 'Jerdrassik and Krafft-Ebing tell of this, but I never saw it before. The ring has acted like a searing-iron!'

'I saw it first on a girl, O'Reilly,' Howell went on in an awe-struck way. 'It was here in the post-mortem theatre, but I thought nothing of it, though the death was incomprehensible to me. The girl was poor Clegg's dispensary patient, and I've found out, since, that one day he took her' (and he nodded towards the table) 'to see her. Then a medical man from Kelso told me of a queer mark he found on the neck of young Henderson, who drowned himself. I went down on purpose to see it, but I couldn't see the connexion. She' (and he nodded at the table again) 'had met him one night in Edinburgh when he was overworked and depressed and she had one of her mad fits on her. Of course I've only learnt that within the last four days. When poor Grosvenor died, I found the mark—I'd got into a habit of looking for it on everybody—and knowing how he fooled with snakes, I began to associate the two things, heaven forgive me!'

'Where did she learn the devilry?' asked Maxwell-Farquharson.

'She worked under Charcot and other men, I know,' I said.

'Do you think she knew nothing of this between the attacks?'

'Nothing at all,' Howell answered. 'Poor soul, we won't

hold her responsible! She was always a spoilt, self-willed, untrained child, so I gathered from her old nurse, and she had no habit of self-control to help her after the fall that began this. The old woman knew, of course, of these attacks, but had no idea, and indeed will have no idea from me, how far they carried her. She just tried to keep her at home, but the poor thing slipped out now and then, and went nursing and street-preaching, and all sorts of things, but always with this homicidal tendency.'

I thought of Mrs. Reay-Carter's speech about 'going into retreat,' and knew now what that had meant.

'It never troubled her,' he went on, 'for she never knew. The old woman says that she knew that, about the time of the full moon, she was liable to some sort of an attack, but she always got angry and excited if she was begged to see a professional man. The attacks were getting more frequent and irregular as this growth increased in size. There would soon have been no sane intervals.'

'Poor Clegg must have suspected something,' I said, 'but I'm sure he didn't know. He couldn't believe it. He must have gone to Grosvenor's class with a sort of idea that he'd get to know more about such things.'

Howell nodded.

'Yes, and even if he felt there was something wrong in his own case, he won't have known of that,' and he laid a finger on his own neck. 'She fooled poor Grosvenor too,' he went on. 'She got every man on his weak point.'

I told them of Reid, whom, of course, Maxwell-Farquharson remembered.

'Ay!' Howell muttered. 'Told him he'd be a great musician, probably. I'd have liked to hear that nocturne of his. She'll have flattered poor Muir's vanity, and set him on to kill Clegg. She was getting more violent every month.'

'Can she have brought Clegg away from Tweedside last week?' I asked.

'There's a case placed on record in our Royal Medical Society's papers by Dann,' Howell answered, shrugging his shoulders, 'where a man, who had been used for these miserable public exhibitions, went off to London, against all reason and not knowing why he went, and met his old master there. The other man said he expected him. I can't tell when he suggested the coming. Perhaps he had done it here before they separated.'



These things, you know, are pretty thoroughly discussed by Moll, of Berlin, on "Hypnotism," in the Contemporary Science Series. We are sure of some things in this direction, but we don't know the limits yet.'

'Can I go?' I said. 'I want fresh air.'

'Let us take you out,' Howell answered. 'You know all about it now, and I need worry you no more. It'll help you later on, I hope.'

I got up and went out of the room, leaning on their arms, but outside the door I stopped.

'Let me go back alone a moment,' I said.

They looked at one another, but let me go, and I went back and bent over the still face alone.

'Forgive me,' I muttered, and passing away, saw it no more.

In the large post-mortem theatre, through an open door, came the shuffle of feet, as the students tramped in, and it made me shiver to hear them. I looked at Howell entreatingly and could not speak, but he understood at once, and replied hastily,

'No, no, certainly not! Nothing of the kind, Tregenna! What do you take me for? No one else will see anything, and she will be buried from her own house to-morrow. Everything is arranged.'

As he said good-bye to us on the doorstep, I held him by the hand.

'There is a dog,' I told him. 'I couldn't bear to have him near me, but if you could arrange a home——'

'The dog is dead,' he interrupted hastily. 'He ate nothing after that night. A broken heart, my dear Tregenna. Now good-bye, and forget it all as quickly as you can.'

'How can I forget?' I said aloud, as I leant on Maxwell-Farquharson's arm and walked toward the gate.

'Some would say,' he answered, 'that the human soul went long ago, and that you only unhoused an Elemental.'

I shrugged my shoulders.

'It may be. I can't be so ungrateful and churlish as to laugh. I have no laughter in me, and besides you helped me in this. I saw that face dimly before I saw Mrs. Reay-Carter's, down at your house that night, but I forgot until I lay thinking it all out after poor Clegg had died.'

Then I laughed weakly, 'Poor Mrs. Reay-Carter! I even suspected her for an hour or two!'

'It's all over now,' he reminded me. 'Think of it no more.'

At that moment a brougham stopped close by, and I saw the Countess looking from the window.

'Will you wait one instant?' I asked him, and I went to her.

'Poor fellow!'—she held out her hand. 'I know all about it. How bad you look! Get in, and I'll drive you wherever you like.'

'I'm with a friend,' I said.

'Ask him to come too,' and so I did, but Maxwell-Farquharson had an engagement; and said good-bye.

'One moment,' I said, as he was turning away. 'Do you remember the trouble you had with her at the Tweedies?'

'Yes,' he nodded.

'What had you said?'

'I told her she lived two lives, from the double lines I saw. The poor soul didn't know it; of course she was vexed, and so naturally did she show it that I thought I was mistaken.'

I thanked him, and went back to the carriage.

'Well,' said the Countess, making room for me, 'have you forgiven Duncan Moir for sending me, and me for calling you in to see a patient?'

I nodded silently, and shivered in my corner.

'Poor fellow!' she said. 'Jura says you're to come for a long holiday now at once, and if you refuse, he'll carry you off himself.'

'He could do it now,' I said. 'I'm not going to refuse.'

The Countess patted my hand approvingly, and I lay back, thinking how thin and ladylike it had got in a few days.

'This is the end of your pride and your obstinacy, then?'

• she asked, smiling at me.

'Yes,' I answered, trying to smile back. 'This is the end.'

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